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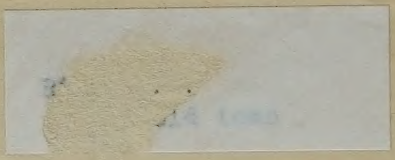

26218

"POST OFFICE."

THE OLD TOWN

BY

JACOB A. RIIS

AUTHOR OF "THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN," "HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES," "THE BATTLE WITH THE SLUM," ETC.

890

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY W. T. BENDA

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TO ALL WHO LOVE
THE OLD HOME AND THE
OLD FRIENDS

26218

THE OLD AND THE NEW

How small this world of ours is, and how close we are, all unknowing, to one another! I had set out to write the story of the Old Town with no thought that it touched the land across the seas and its people in any closer way than through these pages, and through the abiding affection of a few of its children who, like myself, have wandered far from home. And while I wrote there fell into my hands the account of a sale of some building lots half a dozen years ago, in Jersey City, part of a property which for three hundred years had belonged to the Van Riepen family. And the Van Riepen name was shown to mean "from Ribe" — the Old Town itself. This is the historical record:

From the port of Ribe there sailed in April, 1663, a ship bearing the name *Te Bonte Koe,* meaning "The Brindle Cow," bound for New Amster-

dam with eighty-nine passengers aboard. Among them was one Juriaen Tomasson, a citizen of Ribe, who, four years after reaching these shores, married Pryntje Hermans — to be exact, on May 25, 1667; and died on September 12, 1695. From their union sprang two well-known families, one that twisted the Danish name of Jörgen (Juriaen in the record) into Jurianse, which later became Yearance; and the other the Van Riepen, or Van Ripen, family, which thus preserved the name of the Old Town in its purity of pronunciation. For Ribe is pronounced Reebė. The Germans to this day call it Ripen on their maps.

It did more than preserve the mere name — it kept its spirit alive. In the chronicles of the Revolution preserved in his home state we read of a Lieutenant Daniel Van Riepen,[1] one of the descendants of the Juriaen who came over in *Te Bonte Koe*, being captured by the Royalists and imprisoned in the old Sugar House with other

[1] The full story may be read in the "History of Hudson County," where my friend, Rev. R. Andersen, of the Danish church in Brooklyn, an indefatigable delver, unearthed this chip of the old block.

patriots. He must have borne the marks of the hardships they suffered there, for when he was brought before a court-martial in Hoboken to be tried and shot as a rebel, he was ragged and without uniform or distinctions of rank. Asked by the presiding judge why he came thus, being an officer, he made reply: "It is not clothes or arms that make the man."

"What then?" sneered his accuser, one Van Horst.

"This, sir!" said Van Riepen, and smote his breast proudly. Whereat the British officer who attended ordered that he be released.

"He is a man," he said. "Were I ten times a prisoner, I could give no better answer." And the patriot went free.

So the old world and the new have met, and the Old Town won the day once more, this time far from home, with the best of all weapons, — the manhood that is its hall-mark wherever its children are found.

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THE OLD TOWN

THE OLD TOWN

CHAPTER I

THE other day, when I was busy in my garden, I heard the whir of swift wings and saw a flight of birds coming from the hills in the east. Something in the way in which they flew stirred me with a sudden thrill, and I stood up, feeling forty years younger all at once.

"Blackbirds," said Mike, looking aloft, but I knew better. I watched them wistfully, with eager hope, and when they were over me and I saw their orange bills, I knew that I had not been mistaken. They were starlings, beloved friends of my boyhood, come across the seas at last after all these years, looking for me, perhaps. It

seemed as if it must be so, and I dropped spade and trowel, and took up hammer and saw to make boxes for them as I used to, so that they might know I was waiting to welcome them. I am waiting now. Every day I look to see if my feathered chum is there, perched at my window. And he will come, I know. For he cannot have forgotten the good times we had in the long ago.

You see, we grew up together. Almost the earliest thing I remember is the box at my bedroom window which the first rays of the rising sun struck in spring. Then, as soon as ever the winter snows were gone and the daffodils peeped through the half-frozen crust, some morning there would be a mighty commotion in that box. Black shadows darted in and out, and a great scratching and thumping went on. And while I lay and watched with heart beating fast, — for was not here my songster playmate back with the summer and the sunlight on his burnished wing? — out he came on the peg for a sidelong peep at my window, and sat and whistled the old tune, nodding to the bare trees he knew with his brave promise that

presently Jack Frost would be banished for good, and all would be right. Was he not there to prove it? And it was even so. The summer was right on his trail always.

The weeks passed, and the Old Town lay buried in a dreamy sea of blossoming elders. In field and meadow the starling was busy from early dawn till the sun was far in the west; for his young, of whom there was always a vigorous family, — and oh! the glorious blue eggs we loved to peep at before Mrs. Starling had taken them under her wing, — had a healthy appetite and required no end of grubs and worms. But whether they went to sleep early or he thought they had had enough, always when the setting sun gilded the top of the old poplar, he would come with all his friends and sing his evening song. In the very top branches, swaying with the summer wind, they would sit and whistle the clear notes in the minor key I hear yet when I am worn and tired, and that tell me that some day it will all come back, the joy and the sunshine of the young days. It was for him I turned my boyish hands to their first labor of

love. I made him a house of an empty starch box, and later on, when I had learned carpentering, I built for his family a tenement of three flats that hung by my window many years after I knew it no more. I had long been absorbed in the fight with tenements made for human kind by builders with no such friendly feelings, when my father wrote that the winter storms had blown down the box and broken it, and that written inside in my boyish hand, they found these words:

"This box is for starlings, but, by the great horn spoon, not for sparrows.

"Jacob Riis."

We did not like sparrows. They were cheeky tramps, good only to eat when there were enough of them. The starling was a friend.

I suppose it was the near approach of the time of his going away, with the stork and the swallow, to leave us in the grip of the long winter, that made me in desperation try to cage him once. How I could, I don't know. Boys are boys everywhere, I suppose. I made the cage with infinite

toil, caught my starling, and put him in it. But when I saw him darting from side to side struggling to get out to the trees and the grass and the clouds, my heart smote me, and I tore the cage apart and threw open the window. It was many days before I could look my friend in the eye, and I was secretly afraid all winter that he would not come back. But he was a generous bird and bore no grudge. Next spring he was there earlier than ever, as if he knew.

Never have I forgotten it; it is to me as vivid as if it were yesterday, that black day when, with the instinct to "kill something" strong in me, I had gone out with my father's gun, and coming through the willows, met a starling on joyous wing crossing the meadow on the way to his nest. Up went the gun, and before I knew, I had shot him. I can see him folding his wings as he fell at my feet. I did not pick him up. I went home with all the sunlight gone out of the day. I have shot many living things since, more shame to me, but never one that hurt like that. I had slain my friend.

But neither have I forgotten the long peaceful twilights of summer when we drifted down the river in our boat, listening to the small talk of the mother duck with her young, and to the chattering of uncounted thousands of starlings in the reeds where they had settled for the night, settling too, as was proper, the disputes of the day before they went to sleep. If only men were always so wise. In the midst of it we would suddenly get on our feet and shout and clap our hands, and the flock would rise and rise and keep rising, farther and farther down the river, until the sky was darkened and the twilight became night, while the rush of the million wings swelled into rolling thunder. We stood open-mouthed and watched the marvellous sight, while the youngest crowded up close, half afraid.

Ah, well! they were the old days of sweet memories, and here they have come back to me on the wings of the black starling. Who brought him, or how he came, I do not know, but glad am I. And while I am waiting for him to sound his message of cheer and good-will at my window, let me

try and hold fast awhile the Old Town we both loved, and from which it must be that he has come straight. Else, why should he seek me out?

Where the northernmost boundary post of the German empire, shaken by the rude blasts of the North Sea, points its black menacing finger toward the little remnant of stricken Denmark, it stood a thousand years, a lonely sentinel with its face toward the southern foe. Kings were born and buried within its portals, proud bishops ruled it, armies fought for it, and over it, but all these things had passed away. Centuries before it had bidden good-by to the pageantry of royalty and courts, and had gone to sleep with its mouldering past. And it had slept ever since save when the tramp of armies stirred uneasy dreams; but they halted no longer at its gates. The snort of the iron horse, hitched to the nineteenth century, had not yet aroused it in my day. No shriek of steam whistle, scarce a ripple from the great world without, disturbed its rest. There was, indeed, a factory in town, always spoken of as *the* factory, a cotton mill of impossible pretensions, grotesque in

its mediæval setting, and discredited by public opinion as a kind of flying in the face of tradition and Providence at once that invited sure disaster. When disaster did come, though it took the power of two empires to bring it about, — it was an immediate result of the war of conquest waged by Germany and Austria against Denmark that drew the boundary line and built custom-houses within sight of the factory windows, — it was accepted as a judgment any one could have foretold. But even that bold intruder had never been guilty of the impropriety of whistling. The drowsy clatter of mill-wheels where blossoming lilacs dipped over garden walls into the loitering stream was the only sound of industry that broke the profound peace. The flour-mills were among the privileged traditions of the town. They had been handed down from father to son in unbroken succession since the exclusive right to grind the flour of the community had been granted to them by the early kings. No one had ever disputed that right. Perhaps it was not worth contending for; anyhow, it would have been useless. Could a

clearer title to possession be imagined than that the thing had been there before any one could remember?

"Where blossoming lilacs dip over garden walls."

Red-legged storks built their nests on the tiled roofs of the quaint old houses, and swallows reared

their young under the broad eaves, protected like their loftier neighbors by the general good-will of the people, and by the superstition that assigned sure misfortune, even if nothing worse than a plague of boils, to whomsoever should lay profane hand upon them. In the silent halls of the old cloister, where the echo of sandalled feet on stone floors seemed always to linger, — steps of good friars long since dust in forgotten graves, — they flew in and out, and though they built two nests for one, since they were given to raising two broods in the brief summer, they did not wear their welcome out. The turnkey patiently put up an extra shelf, for, old as was he, were not the swallows tenants before him?

Ponderous whale-oil lamps swung across the streets in rusty chains that squeaked in every vagrant breeze a dismal accompaniment to the cry of the night watch. In such a setting tinder-boxes and quill pens seemed quite the thing. I well remember the distrustful resentment in which old teachers held the "English" (steel) pens. They still clung to the goose-quill, which no one

to-day would know how to cut. But the word "penknife" had meaning in those days. Envelopes were a still later discovery. Letters were folded and sealed with wax, and we boys collected seals as the boys of to-day collect stamps; and a good deal more of variety and human interest there was in the collection. I mind the excitement when the first bottle of "Pennsylvania oil" came into our house. I fetched it myself from the grocer's, bottled like beer at eight skilling a bottle. Very likely they were Lübeck skilling, reminiscent of the middle ages when the Hanse Towns so thoroughly monopolized all trade in the North that their very coinage endured centuries after their League had ceased to be. Other things lasted. Their factors in foreign lands were bachelors, whether from choice or compulsion I do not know, and to this day the Danish word for bachelor is "Pebersvend," *i.e.* pepper clerk, spices being a chief ware in their shops. As for the telegraph, people shook their heads at it as a more than dubious American notion, though the undoubted success of the first sewing-machine that

had come to town had disposed them to lend a lenient ear to its claims.

Above this little world of men the old Domkirke reared its gray head, a splendid vision of the great things that were. Travellers approaching the town saw it from afar, a majestic pile against whose strong walls the town leaned with its time-worn old houses and crooked streets as if seeking strength and comfort against the assault of the gathering years. Its square red tower was a landmark for skippers far out at sea. The Dom itself was, and always had been, the heart and soul of the Old Town. It was so when the early Christian bishops built it in the twelfth century, for though kings abode in its shadow, they were their advisers and the real masters of the city. It was even more so after the Reformation had clipped the wings of the clergy. With their power went the commerce and the prestige of the Old Town; there remained little but the Domkirke and the Latin School that had been part of it from the beginning, and about these centred its life and all its normal interest. There

"The old Domkirke reared its gray head."

were those, it is true, who dreamed of a return of the great days by wedding Ribe once more to the sea through a ship canal to deep water, but it was a dream that ended when they built a harbor at Esbjerg, a scant dozen miles away. After that the Old Town slept on, undisturbed by the world without.

They were mighty men who built the Domkirke, and went far afield for the stone of which they reared it. There is none in Denmark, so they sent their ships over the North Sea and up the river Rhine for the gray stone of which they built the walls, and in quarries on the Weser they found granite for the great pillars and sandstone for the lighter ones. They wrought in the fashion of their day, but those that came after them and raised the great tower of burned brick had learned another that suited their purpose better; and so while the gentler Roman curve was that of the church, the tower stood forth in the massive strength of the Goth, as it had need, for it was the strong place of the burghers as the castle was the King's stronghold. Watchmen kept a constant

lookout from it in times of war for an approaching enemy, and the great bell hung there, the "storm bell," that called the people to arms. It had long been dumb in my day, for it was feared that to ring it would imperil the tower. But when the autumn storms bellowed about the gables of the Dom, sometimes we heard at dead of night a deep singing note above the crash of falling tiles, and then we hugged our pillows close and held our breath to listen; for when the bell sang, it was warning that the sea was coming in.

The Old Town stood on a wide plain, the fertile marsh between it and the shore, behind it the barren heath, with no tree or shrub to break the sweep of the pitiless west wind. The very broom on the barrows, beneath which slept the old vikings, it cropped short on the side that looked toward the sea they loved so well. Summer and winter it piped its melancholy lay above their heads. At sundown the sea-fogs, rolling in over the land in a dense gray cloud, wrapped them in their damp embrace. There was no dike to protect the coast, but beyond the shallows lay a

string of islands that within historic times had been torn from the mainland, and these stood the brunt of the onset when the North Sea was angry. But when the wind had blown hard from the west for days, as was its wont, and then veered to the north, so that the waters from the great deep were

THE CAUSEWAY IN A STORM.

massed in the inlet, then it was we heard the big bell sing in the tower.

Morning broke after such a night, upon a raging ocean where at sunset there had been meadows and dry fields. Far as the eye reached only storm-tossed waves were in sight. The shores were

strewn with perch and other fresh-water fish that were driven up on the pavement in shoals by the rushing tides. On the great causeway that stretched north and south, high above the flood level, cattle, hares, grouse, and field-mice huddled together in wretched, shivering groups. With break of day the butchers of the town went out, if going was at all possible, to bleed the drowning cattle that could yet be saved for food. Sometimes the trip had to be made in boats, and even in the streets of the town these were in demand when the "storm-flood" was at its height. I recollect very well seeing the water washing through the ground-story windows of the houses down by the harbor. By ordinary tides we were there five miles from the sea. At such times, when the flood had surprised the cattle yet in the far-outlying pastures, we heard news of disaster. The herders had been slow in gaining the refuges provided for them, and had perished with their herds.

If the flood came before the mail had got in, an anxious outlook was kept at the town gate,

where the sea could be seen rising higher and higher, threatening with each swell to wash quite over the roadway. White-painted posts were set on both sides of it to mark out the way for the driver even if water covered it knee-deep, but in spite of this precaution, the trip was full of peril. If the coach were blown over, or the team succumbed, the passengers had but a slim chance of escaping with their lives. On such nights a band of resolute men gathered in the shelter of the farthest houses ready to go to the rescue on the first warning of danger. I was very proud to be one of these when I was a big boy of sixteen. But big as I was when the summons came and we sallied forth to bring the exhausted team in, it took all my strength to stand against the furious blast. The waves beat upon the causeway and were carried across it in a pelting rain of brine that stung like whip-lashes. In water halfway to our waists, in utter darkness and numbed with cold, we groped our way toward the lights of the town scarce a hundred yards away. How that driver had lived through

it, I shall never understand. The relief when we reached shelter was great, but greater my pride when the stern old Amtmand, the chief government officer of the county, caught me by the shoulder and whirled me around to have a look at the fellow who had lent him a hand in need.

"Strong boy," he said, and rapped me smartly with his cane; "be a man yet," which was praise indeed from him. And I forgot that I was cold and wet through, in my pride.

They used to tell a story of another Amtmand who, fresh from his snug berth at the capital, had come out to take the post in the Old Town, as ill luck would have it a passenger in the mail on just such a night. It was too much for him. He waited only till the tide fell enough to clear the way, then fled the town, with the parting shot that "Ribe might be good enough for ducks and geese, but not for men." He never came back, but set up his office in another town where he was out of reach of the North Sea. Well for him he was not there on that awful Christmas Eve when the water reached the very Domkirke

itself, and rose five feet or more over its floor. Many years before, another flood had torn thirty parishes from the coast. The sea swallowed them up. It stands in the old records as "de grote Mandranck" (1362) because of the loss of life it caused. Shortly before the Reformation the water rose so high in the streets that the cloister of the Black Friars stood in a lake, and the monks caught fish for their supper in the portico that enclosed their garden. One may be permitted the hope that this flood came on a Friday to fitly replenish their larder.

Indeed, the history of the Old Town was one long succession of such disasters that had craved lives and wasted treasure without end, yet had never taught the people the lesson their southern neighbors had learned early. "Preserve, O Lord, the dikes and dams in the King's marshlands; watch over the widows and the fatherless," read a petition in our old prayer-book. The King's marshlands went their way when the Germans stole them, but the Old Town stood, and stands still in its undiked plain, heedless alike of warn-

ing and experience. One may see all I have written here, by evil chance this very winter, if he cares to go and risk it.

When after a storm-flood the waters ebbed out, field and beach were covered with the drift of the Gulf Stream, driven in by the long gale, and amid the snows of the northern winter we boys roasted our potatoes, and an occasional dead bird, over bonfires built of the bleached husks of the cocoa-palm, banana stalks, water-logged Brazil-nuts, and other wreck of the tropics.

It could not well be otherwise than that the sea, which knocked upon our doors so often and so rudely, played a great part in the lives and in the imagination of the people. From the islands I spoke of the whole male population was absent in summer, and often enough the year round. They were sailors, all of them, and a Fanö [1] skipper to-day walks the bridge of many a ship that ties up at its pier in New York or Philadelphia.

[1] Fanö and Manö are the two islands just outside the Old Town.

The women, left in charge of the little farms, did all the chores, including the getting in of such crops as they raised in their sand-dunes and tending to the stock. The Old Town, too, left stranded by

FANÖ WOMEN.

the sanding in of the mouth of the river, nevertheless furnished its full quota to the merchant marine of more lands than Denmark. The sea gave it lime to build its houses with, and the lime that was burned of sea-shells held what it was laid to bind. It gave the fisherman a living,

and the housewife cleaner and cheaper carpets than our day knows of. Clear pine floors, scrubbed spotlessly clean and with the white sea-sand swept in "tongues" over them, had a home-like something about them which no forty-dollar rug harbors.

The thunder-storms, which in the dog-days were often very severe, came and went with the tides. The same storm, having gone out to sea with the ebb, would come back on the flood tide and keep the farmers awake who lived under a roof of thatch. Good cause; I have seen as many as half a score of farm-houses burning after a long night's storm. Thus, too, people died when the tide ebbed. One who was on his death-bed could not find rest while the tide was in, but when it went out he went out with it. There was something in all this of the old days when Odin and Thor were worshipped where the Domkirke now stood, something of the nature worship and of the fatalism of pagan times. Was it Oliver Wendell Holmes who said that we are omnibuses in which all our ancestors ride? Sometimes

I find myself struggling with a "fate" which I cannot bend to my will or purpose, and then comes to me out of the past the Jute farmer's calm "When a man's time is up, he must die;" along with the recollection of a friend's experience, a clergyman in that country. A woman with a child born out of wedlock sought poor relief because of her handicap. When he remonstrated gently that she had saddled herself with a needless burden, her curt reply was: "No use talking that way; the children one has to have, one will get."

The philosophy of one of my teachers in the Latin School was of a different kind. It was custom in the Old Town for the members of the Fire Company to get up and get ready at the third heavy clap of thunder, and though my father was not of the corps he followed the custom. Dressed for the street, with his insurance and other valuable papers ready to hand, he sat the storm out in his easy-chair, the better to marshal his household in time of need. His friend could not understand that any one should

break his sleep for a thunder-storm and go to all that trouble. "What for?" he asked.

"Suppose the lightning were to strike the house," said my father.

The other looked stunned. "Why," he said, "what beastly bad luck."

With all this record of fight and fire and flood, the Old Town was the reverse of strenuous. Its prevailing note was of sweetness and rest. The west wind that cut like a knife in November was soft in June as the touch of a woman's hand. The grass was never as green in meadow; the wild blossoms that nodded on the river bank were never so sweet; nor ever did bird sing in forest or field as sang the skylark to its mate in my childhood's home, as it soared toward the sky. The streets in the Old Town were narrow and crooked, and in their cobble-stone pavements the rain stood in pools that tempted unwary feet. But there were lights in the windows for glad home-comers. Neighbor knew neighbor and shared his grief and his joys. No one was rich, as wealth is counted nowadays; but then

no one was allowed to want for the daily bread. "Good day and God help" was the everyday salutation to a man at work; "God bless," if he were eating. They were ways of speech, it is true, but they were typical of the good feeling that was over and above all the sign of the Old Town and its people.

CHAPTER II

SEAL OF THE OLD TOWN IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

IF war and war's alarms creep into the story of the Old Town on every page, despite the fact that its name to me is peace, the reason is not far to seek. I was not yet a month old when my mother had to fly from home with me in her arms, on the outbreak of war. A report ran through the land that the "slaves," that is, the prisoners in the Holstein state prison, had been freed by the Germans and were swarming north, the vanguard of an army that looted and laid waste where it went. The women with little children were hurriedly sent away, and the Old Town prepared to give battle to the invaders. Barricades were built and manned; the council requi-

sitioned two hundred pounds of powder from the next town, to be carried in as he could by the village express, who made his trips on foot, and they dug up an old cannon that had done duty as a hitching post a hundred years or more, to impress it into the municipal defence. The unencumbered women moulded bullets and boiled water and pitch in the houses overlooking the route of the enemy's supposed advance. The parishes roundabout sent squads of peasants to the defence armed with battle-axes and spears. They will show you those weapons yet in the Town Hall. They keep the record there, too, of the council at which peace prevailed, on the showing of military experts that it would cost two hundred daler[1] to dam the river and flood the fields to stop an army. That was voted to be too steep a price to pay for being sacked, perhaps, in the end, as a captured town. But it is not the whole story, I am sure. Better sense must have dawned, I imagine, at the sight of those armaments. That they would have died on the barricades to the

[1] About one hundred dollars.

last man in defence of their homes I know, for I knew them. How carefully and deliberately they planned is shown by the erection of one of the barricades in front of the drug store, where Hoffmann's Drops would be handy "in case any were taken ill." It was not faint-heartedness, but cool foresight.

When the summons came for the last time, I was a half-grown boy. I remember it, that gray October morning, when a gendarme, all dusty and famished from his long, hard ride, reined in his panting horse at the tavern in the market-place, where the children were just then swarming with their school books. I hear the clatter of the iron-shod hoofs in the quiet streets, the clanging of his sabre as he leaped from the saddle and spoke gravely to the inn-keeper. Far and fast as he had come, riding farther and riding farther; ghostly legions were even then hurrying from the south on his trail to grieve the echoes of the Old Town. I see the sudden awe in the faces as the whispered message went from mouth to mouth, "The King is dead," — the

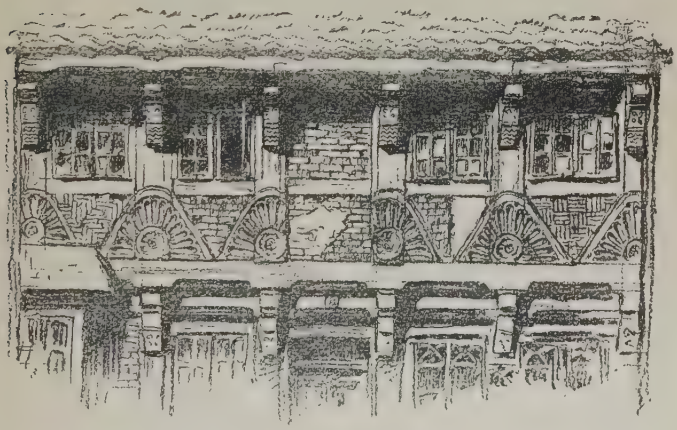
King whom the people loved as their friend, last of his house, to whose life was linked inseparably the destiny of Denmark. I see the solemn face of our old Rector and hear the quiver in his voice as he bade us go home, there would be no school that day; a great sorrow had come upon the land.

I see our little band trooping homeward, all desire to skip or play swallowed up in a vague dread of nameless disaster. I live over again the dark days when, in the hush of all other sounds and cares, we listened by night and by day to the boom of cannon coming nearer and nearer from the Eider, where the little Danish flock was matched in unequal combat against the armies of two mighty empires. Then the flight of broken and scattered regiments, hunted, travel-worn, and desperate, through the town. The bivouac in the Square, with shotted guns pointing southward over the causeway. The smile that will come is followed by a tear as I recall the trembling eagerness, the feverish haste of faithful hands that packed our school arsenal —

twenty-five historic muskets of the Napoleonic era — in boxes to be taken out to sea and sunk, lest they become the prey of the enemy. They are rusting there yet. After we had seen the Prussian needle-guns, they were left to their fate. And when the last friend was gone on his way, the long days of suspense, the nightly vigils at the South-gate, where at last we heard the tread of approaching armies which none of us should live to see return; for within our sight Denmark was cut in twain by German bayonets.

So, a child of the Old Town may be forgiven for calling up the Red Gods on occasion. Indeed, they had left their tracks where he who ran might read. The other day I heard how, in restoring the Bishop's Manse, they had come upon traces of the old spiral stairway, which even in that house of peace wound to the right, as the custom was, so that the man defending it might have his right hand free, while the attacking enemy had to strike from the left. Perhaps, though, it was not always a house of peace, nor the enemy all of the world and the flesh, for I read in the

archives of the Domkirke of a least one pitched battle between the Brethren of the Chapter, that is, the clerics attached to the cathedral, and the Bishop, in which the latter had his robe torn from his back. Three hundred years later I find



An Old House.

the Chapter uniting in a round-robin to the Bishop, in which perjury, simony, and lewdness are among the open offences laid at his door. Unless he mend his ways, they give notice, they will have him before the Pope.

Doughty scrappers were they ever, those old Jutes. Doubtless there was reason for the Ribe

justice that was proverbial throughout the days when each town was a law unto itself. "'You thank God, sonny,' is an old saw that has come down to this day, 'that you weren't punished by Ribe law,' said the old woman, when she saw her son hung on the Varde gallows." Varde was

THE IRON HAND.

the next town, a little way up the coast. The symbol of that justice was an iron hand over the town gate which, tradition said, warned any who might be disposed to buy up grain and food-stuffs to their own gain, that for "cornering" the means of living, in Ribe a man had his right hand cut off. Good that the hand was never nailed on Trinity Church or on the Chicago Board of Trade, else what

a one-handed lot of men we should have there and in Wall Street! Whether that was the real purpose of it or not, the Old Town was ruled with an iron hand indeed in those days. Witness the report, preserved in its archives, of the conviction of a woman for *stealing* the hand-iron which her thieving husband carried off with him when he broke jail. She filed it off and threw it into a neighbor's yard, and not only she, but the neighbor, too, was convicted of theft. And stealing was a hanging matter. Stealing less than two dollars' worth of property took a man to the gallows straight; but a woman, "for decency's sake," was buried alive in the gallows hill. For murder, counterfeiting and adulteration of honey, — why specially honey, I do not know, — and for eloping with another's wife, a man's head was chopped off with the big sword that still hung in the Town Hall. There were holes in the end of it, so that it might be weighted and made to "bite." The bigamist was merely turned out of town and mulcted in half his belongings. But even the iron hand did not stop

brawling, and other measures had to be adopted. A man was accused of knocking another on the head with a spear, — prodding was the fashion of murder only, — but legal evidence was lacking. Nevertheless, the "jury of the North-gate" found him guilty on the principle that for an eye an eye was due, and he was sentenced to pay damages to the injured man, to the King, and to the town, and to stand committed "until such time as he catches another in his place." And he in jail!

It seems almost jolly by comparison, certainly it has a more modern, not to say familiar sound, to find another jury acquitting a malefactor in the face of convincing evidence of his guilt upon grounds that seem delicately suggested in the question from the bench why they, the jurymen, "had demanded a keg of beer of the prisoner." The record mentions one obstinate juryman, perhaps the original prohibitionist, who entered an ineffectual protest against the verdict.

With all their staid solemnity there is a comic vein in some of these old records. As, for in-

stance, when Jep Bennedsen, appearing to prosecute a horse thief, swears that "the dappled mare which is here present, he bought of Anders Munk and it is God's and his own horse." Or, when a man charged with the theft of a neighbor's axe proceeds to swear "on his soul and salvation and his uplifted hand, and asks God to curse him and push him in under the foot of Lucifer if he ever had the axe"; then, suddenly reflecting, adds, "Wait; if I did, I will give it back to him." But the musty pages in which these facts are set down with minutest care betray no appreciation of their humor.

The stern old Ribe justice had but a leg and a half left to stand on, as it were, in my day. The effective police force of the town consisted of two able-bodied night-watchmen and a beadle with a game leg, but with a temper and an oaken staff that more than made up for his other defects. In ordinary times, always excepting New Year's Eve, when it was the privilege of the Old Town to cut up as it saw fit, this was quite sufficient to preserve the public peace, for brawling

as an occupation had long ceased, and crime was almost unknown. The commotion that was caused by a real burglary when I was a little lad can therefore be understood. As a matter of fact there was nothing very alarming about the crime. The thief had merely forced a door, that was fastened after the simple fashion of the day and place with a wooden whorl, and taken some money from an open drawer; but he had cut his hand in doing it, and there were smears of blood on the wall that made the mystery ever so much more dreadful to us all. To cap the climax, it was public property he had taken, the King's money, for it was the custom-house he had robbed. The whole community was aroused, and the town council met promptly to consider the emergency. It is fair to state that it distinctly rose to it. The records of that meeting are still in existence. The business in hand, so they state, being to catch the thief, it was suggested by a member that this could not be done while the watchmen clattered about at night in wooden clogs and cried the hours; for so they gave warning to any evil-

doer who might be lurking around. To this the meeting agreed, and it was resolved that they must henceforth cease bawling and put on boots — and rubbers. The sum of four daler was voted to equip the force with these police accoutrements, and was duly entered in the budget of the town to be raised by taxation.

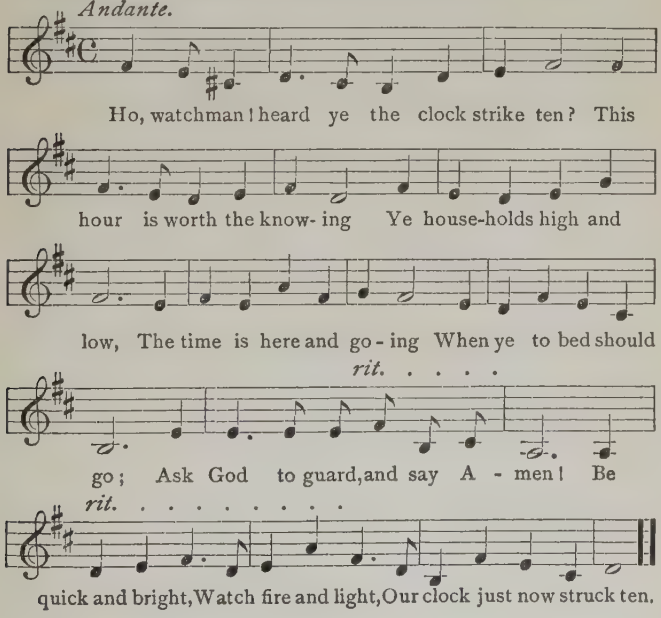
The thief, if I remember rightly, was never caught, but the event proved that the departure from the ancient landmarks was too radical. Thief or no thief, the town could by no possibility sleep without being awakened hourly by the cry of the watchmen; or if it did go to sleep it didn't know it, which was almost, if not quite, as bad. Universal insomnia threatened to wreck its peace. Within a month the entire community, headed by the councilmen themselves, petitioned the municipality to unloose again the watchmen's tongues. A compromise was made upon the basis of the boots, and was religiously kept till within a year, when, I am told, the crying of the hour finally ceased.

I am sorry it did, for it was a picturesque relic

of its mediæval past, which after all is the real setting of the Old Town. It was not a mere cry, or senseless shout. In its mournful melody, that took kindly to the cracked and weather-beaten voices of the singers, I live over again those long and lonesome nights when I lay awake, listening to the buffeting of the winds, and followed the ships on their course over the sea where it swept unchecked, wondering what the great world in which they moved might be like. People went to bed early in those days, and the watchman raised his voice at eight o'clock. From that hour until four in the morning he sang his song,

A Watchman.

every hour a new verse, supposed to have special reference to the time of night. The curious commingling of pious exhortation with homely advice on the everyday affairs of domestic life was characteristic of the time and of the people. At ten o'clock he put in a pointed reminder to the laggard that it was time to turn in, thus:


Andante.
Ho, watchman! heard ye the clock strike ten? This
hour is worth the know- ing Ye house-holds high and
low, The time is here and go - ing When ye to bed should
rit. . . . .
go; Ask God to guard, and say A - men! Be
rit. . . . . .
quick and bright, Watch fire and light, Our clock just now struck ten.

At one o'clock he sang:

Ho, watchman! Our clock is striking one.
Oh, Jesus, wise and holy,

Help us our cross to bear.
There is no one too lowly
To be beneath thy care.
Our clock strikes one; in darkest night
Oh, helpful friend,
Thy comfort send,
Then grows the burden light.

The Old Town was the county-seat, and the county was large, but I do not remember that there were at any time more than two lawyers. One was good, the other bad. By bad I mean not that he was a bad lawyer, but reputed to be tricky, whereas the other was known to be honor itself. It is therefore perhaps the best character I can give my people when I record the fact — it was so stated, and I have not the least doubt that it was true — that when two farmers quarrelled, each sure that he was right, they made haste to hitch up to get first to the honest lawyer, and usually that was the end of the quarrel; for the last in the race was willing to make peace. They used to tell of two well-to-do neighbors who had fallen out over a line fence and started simultaneously for town. Both had good teams, and

they were well matched in the race. For half an hour they drove silently alongside of one another, each on his own side of the road, grimly urging on their horses, but neither gaining a length. At last, as the lights of the town came into sight, for it was evening, a trace broke on one of the rigs and the horses stopped. The other team was whirled away in a cloud of dust.

"Hans!" the beaten one called after him, and he halted and looked back.

"Are you going after Lawyer —— ?" naming the square one.

"I am that," came back.

"Then let's go back. I am beat;" and back home they went and made it up.

In contrast to this comedy of the highway stands in my memory a human tragedy that made a deep impression upon our childish minds, though we little understood at the time. There was in our street a public-house keeper with whose pretty daughter we played at our daily games until she grew out of short skirts into a very handsome but flashy young woman. After

a while she disappeared, and rumors reached the town that she was living in Hamburg upon the wages of sin, whereat the little circle in which she had spun her top buzzed mightily, and scandalized mammas turned up their noses with an "I told you so." Her mother went about red-eyed as if from much crying, but was rarely seen outside her house. As for the father, publican that he was, he said nothing, but grimly held his peace.

Then one day a stylish carriage, the most elegant the town owned, drove up to the door of the public house, and a lady in silks and furbelows, and with a mammoth ostrich-feather sweeping her shoulder, descended and went in. Like a storm wind the report spread through the street that Helene had come home a fine lady, and we boys gathered to see the carriage and the show. We were standing there when the door of the house was opened, and the publican and his daughter came out. She was weeping pitifully, and the feather drooped sadly as he gave her his arm and, with face sternly set but with

the dignity of righteous fatherhood, led her to the carriage, helped her in, and, closing the door, bade the coachman drive on. At the window we caught a moment's glimpse of the mother's tearful face as the coach turned the corner; then the door closed, and we saw and heard no more. We knew, somehow, that a drama of human sin and sorrow had been enacted in our sight, but little else. Years after, I heard what had happened within. She had come in her paint and her fripperies, unrepenting, to her old home; but barely within its shelter had been met by her father with the hard demand whether she was living honestly.

"First answer me," he said, barring the way to her mother; "are you honest?"

And when she was silent and hung her head, he led her forth, an outcast without her mother's kiss. The Old Town never saw her again.

Happily the ordinary tenor of life there ran on a different plane. Neighborly kindness ruled; on the basis of the square deal, however: to every one his own. Stick up for your rights; these

secure, go any length to oblige a neighbor. It is a characteristic of the Danish people, who are essentially honest, intolerant of pretence, stubbornly democratic, and withal good-natured to a degree. Hence their apparent passion for argument, which is all-pervading, but utterly harmless, excepting as it delays action. Business is held up; trains appear sometimes to stop for argument between the station-master and conductor. When the whistle blows, they part with a nod and a cordial "Paa Gjensyn" — *au revoir*. When I was last there, I was a listener to a conversation between two men, strangers to one another, who were waiting for a train. The one had overheard the other tell his name and that of the town he hailed from. He turned upon him straightway:

"Are you Christian Sörensen?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"So you are that? And you are from Hvillingebäk."

"Yes, I am that," patiently.

"So — I thought there was only one Christian

Sörensen in Hvillingebäk, and him *I* know," with strong emphasis on the "I."

"Yes! Well, my name is Jens Christian Sörensen."

Two minutes after I saw them taking a stein of beer together at the depot bar, on the friendliest of terms.

Of such kind was the long-standing feud between the factory owner in the Old Town and Knud Clausen, his next-door neighbor, who kept cows. Knud's manure heap, which was his wealth, for he had also a farm, was right under the other's dining-room window and was not nice, to put it mildly. The man of industry and wealth tried to buy it many a time and oft, but Knud would not sell; not he, for in an unguarded moment the other had disputed his right to keep it there at all, and he was merely standing upon his undoubted rights. Had not his father kept it there before him? So it was a drawn battle, and the subject of many heart-burnings, until the Palm Sunday when the manufacturer's daughter went to confirmation. Knud loved

the ground she trod on, as did every one else in the Old Town, and sought a way of showing his good-will. He found it in the bone of contention in his back yard. When the family, returning from church, sat down to dinner, they beheld the offensive pile hidden entirely under a layer of grass and green leaves with daisies stuck in, like silver stars on a green carpet, and Knud himself beaming all over, presenting congratulations in mimic show.

When the government undertook to replace the deadly slow old hymns that were sung in church on Sunday with some of more modern cast, and to that end introduced a new hymn-book, it came to a characteristic fight between the conservative countryfolk, who wanted no change, and their clergy carrying out the orders from headquarters. The peasants flatly refused to sing the new tunes. When the preceptor struck up one, they calmly sang the old and drowned him and the parson out. The battle raged for years before the new prevailed, just how I do not know. The government tried to

seize the old books and burn them, but it only made matters worse. Some compromise was made, without doubt, or they would be singing the old tunes to this day.

The "stalwart Jutes" they called the country-folk round about the Old Town, and stalwart they are, as Germany is finding out trying to bend those south of the Konge-aa to her will. She may do it in Alsace and Lorraine perhaps, — I don't know, — but not with them. They will be Danes four hundred years hence, as they have been these forty under daily persecution. They will do nothing rash, but give in they never will. It is their way. Let me end this battlesome chapter, when I yearned only for peace, with the characteristic tale of my old friend Rosenvinge, who was set to guard a prisoner in the war of '49. The man was a disloyal burgomaster or sheriff or something from one of the Schleswig towns, brought in by order of the government, to be kept and guarded in Ribe. Rosenvinge — may his shadow never grow less! he lives yet, near the nineties if not in them, and goes his

daily rounds in the old cloister of which he is the keeper — Rosenvinge was the sentinel. The call for breakfast came after a night on the road, for suspects had to be taken by stealth and under cover of darkness. The sentinel was hungry. Never was man a hero without his porridge. No guard relief was in sight. There was but one way, and he took it. He put his gun in the corner with the prisoner, and went calmly across the street to the tavern, whence came the compelling savors of fried herring and hot Tvebak. Nor did he hurry himself over his coffee, but took his time. A soldier must have a good digestion, or he will have no stomach for the stern duties of war. Let it be recorded that he found his prisoner faithfully guarding the gun when he came back and awaiting his turn at the herring. To disturb a man's breakfast by running away — if, indeed, it would have disturbed it — would have been dishonorable; not to mention that thereby he would have lost his own. A square deal and nothing in haste was the good working plan of the Old Town.

"He found his prisoner faithfully guarding the gun when he came back."

CHAPTER III

"EYES THAT SPOKE OF THINGS UNSEEN BY THE CROWD."

OUR house was in Black Friars' Street, right around the corner from Peer Down's Slip in the picture. The Slip was a short cut to school for us boys, and we skipped through it lightly enough, morning, noon, and evening. Mother never passed it, but always went the other way. It stood for the great sorrow of her life, for at the foot of it, where the river ran swiftly, my younger brother was drowned while at play. Theodore was ten.

Though my mother had a house full, I do not believe she ever got over the shock of this first great trouble. To me it calls up two things which at the time caused me much wonderment. One was the strange consideration, even deference, with which I was treated by the boys who used to fight me and call me names, in the long week while they dragged the river for the body. Even my arch-enemy, Liar Hans, who skinned cats and hated me, let me alone. It gave me a queer feeling of being deserted and cast out which I made haste to get over when opportunity came. The other had somehow to do with this same experience, though I could not make out the connection.

There was in the Old Town among the clergy attached to the Domkirke one with whom my father was on a war footing, so to speak. They were not enemies, for they were Christians. But Pastor Jacobi was a very bright and clever man with a caustic wit of which he was in no wise sparing. Father's mental equipment was not unlike his in those younger days, and they

Peer Down's Slip.

clashed often, taking instinctively opposite sides in public discussion, until it had come to be understood, among us boys, at least, that they were not friends. Out of such a case we had an easy way; they, being men, could not fight and were forced to carry around their grievance unslaked. Hence my astonishment may be understood when, upon my father answering a knock at the door while we were together in the first burst of grief, I beheld Pastor Jacobi standing on the threshold. Without a word he opened his arms, and my father walked straight into them. So they stood and wept. As I looked at them standing there, I felt that somehow, wholly irregular and incomprehensible as it was, something good had entered that house of mourning, a sweetness that took the sting out of our grief. They were ever after friends.

The trees that hang over the wall of the Slip grew in the garden of our neighbor, Quedens, and our house abutted on it. We were his tenants. Herr Quedens was one of the solid merchants of the town. He was an old man as far

back as I can remember, little, dried-up; but in the kind face with its mock seriousness that was in a perpetual struggle with the shrewd twinkle in eyes which saw ever the good in man and sought the way of helping it, the soul of the Old Town seems mirrored to me. If any one was in trouble or need, his path led straight to the Quedens' back door. Mr. Quedens himself would have barred the front door, that was in full sight of the town, with a severity which somehow without words managed to convey the message that at the other, in the narrow street around the corner where no one was looking, there was a pitying soul that had balm for all wounds. And so there was; for there Mrs. Quedens was in charge. Dear

NEIGHBOR QUEDENS.

old friends! Sweet dreams be yours in your long sleep. The world seems poorer, the Old Town empty, without your gentle presence. It must be that even the Sunday service in the Domkirke is unreal without those good gray heads. His voice rose long and quavering from his seat on the men's side, always a bar behind the congregation; but he sang on undisturbed, finishing the hymn in his own good time and in his own way, which was not the way of earthly harmony; but in the angels' choir it rises clear and sweet, I know. It was ever heavy upon my conscience that once, and only once, Mrs. Quedens expressed a desire to box my ears soundly. That was when my love-making had disconcerted the Old Town and fatally broken its peace. But even then she refrained; and in his office Herr Quedens looked up a little later and pinched my arm with his quizzical look. "We must be patient, patient," he said, and somehow I felt that there was one who understood.

It happened that Father and he had birthday together, and the eighteenth of March was the

great feast-day of both our houses. I think that the fact that Grover Cleveland was also born on that day helped on the great liking I had for the ex-President in his later years. On that day we gathered, old and young, around the board in the Quedens home and had a great time. Father invariably had a song which he had written for the occasion with special reference to the events of the year; as invariably to the great surprise of Mr. Quedens, who knew all about it, but never ceased to wonder loudly at these poetic achievements. No one was forgotten; there was a verse for every member of the family — theirs; not ours, it was too large, we should never have gotten through the dinner. As it was, the night-watchman's midnight verse usually came in and finished it, and we heard the tramp of his heavy boots at the gate as Mrs. Quedens disappeared from the table to see that he was not forgotten.

Sunday evenings always saw a friendly gathering at their home, there being no vesper service in the Domkirke, since it could not be lighted.

We youngsters danced and played games. Our elders had a quiet rubber of whist, or gossiped over their knitting and the fine embroidery they did in those days. There was one article that went with the knitting pins which very recently I have seen come back, as a curiosity I suppose. It was an implement of polite use then — the scratching stick I mean. A slender rod with an ivory hand on its end, the fingers set "a-scratch." I can think of no better way of describing it. It was handy if a lady's back needed scratching, to reach down with, and no doubt it was the source of much solid comfort. When the watchman cried ten, Mr. Quedens would look up from his whist and remark innocently:

"Well, Anna, what do you say? I say when our company go home, we'll go to bed." The company took the hint.

On the Monday morning preceding Lent we children had a game that reversed the usual order of things and was fine fun. We went around then and "whipped up" our friends with festive rods trimmed with colored paper rosettes. For being

caught in bed they were mulcted in many "boller," a kind of sweetened bun, or else pennies. They made a point, of course, of staying in bed late, and cried piteously as we beat the feather beds with all our might. Mr. Quedens always cried loudest of all and begged for mercy in his droll half-German speech, while we gleefully laid it on all the harder.

Across the main street from the Quedens home one of the two Jewish families in Ribe kept shop. They were quiet good people, popular with their neighbors, who took little account of the fact that they were Jews. The Old Town was not given to religious discussions, for good cause: with this exception it was all one way. There was not a Roman Catholic in the country, I think. Baptists we had heard of as sad heretics quite beyond the pale; Methodism was but a name. We were all Lutherans, and that as such we had a monopoly of the way of salvation followed, of course.

So perhaps it was not so strange after all that Mrs. Tacchau should fall out with her life-long

friend, Mrs. Kerst, who was as stubbornly zealous in her churchmanship as she was good and generous in her life. The Jewess had always known how to steer clear of the dangerous reef, but at last they struck it fair.

"Well, well, dear friend," said she, trying desperately to back away, "don't let us talk about it. Some day when we meet in heaven we shall know better."

It was too much. Her friend absolutely bristled.

"What! *Our* heaven? Indeed, no! Here we can be friends, Mrs. Tacchau. But there — really, excuse *me!*"

It has helped me over many a stile since to remember that she really was a good woman. She was that. I have seldom known a better.

Which brings me naturally to the good Dean of the Domkirke. Pastor Koch was my teacher in the Latin School when the blow fell that separated Denmark from her children south of the Konge-aa. His father had been the parish priest in Döstrup, one of the villages across the

line, and his father before him, and so on through an unbroken chain back almost to the Reformation. When the separation came, old Gabriel Koch moved to Ribe, rather than swear allegiance to the conquerors, and died of a broken heart. There messengers from the old parish found his son, then in orders, and bade him come to them. His church, his people needed him, they said. The parish was Danish despite the German occupation and would always remain so. The change of allegiance would be a mere matter of form. Would he come? They were waiting and yearning for the son of the old house.

THE GOOD DEAN OF THE DOMKIRKE.

They pleaded long and earnestly, but he stood firm. He could not take oath to serve the ene-

mies of his country. When the men from Döstrup went back over the line, Pastor Koch stood at the South-gate, shading his eyes with his hands, and followed their retreating forms until they vanished in the sunset. He had brought the last sacrifice, forever closing the door upon his life-dream, that of filling the pulpit of his fathers. To the day of his death, I think, he never ceased to look southward with a yearning that had no words. And from below the line longing eyes were directed, are yet, toward the square tower of the Domkirke with the white cross on red waving from its top. Like him, they are men who never forget.

It is the way, I guess, of the Old Town. Last year, when I was within a day's journey of it, travelling toward Denmark, news reached me that an old friend had gone to her long home. Mrs. Hansen was the wife of the "middle-miller," for there were three on the three branches of the river. It was at her door I bade good-by to my mother when I went into the great world, and it was she who comforted her. Mother told

me in after years, with the assurance that "Jacob will come back President of the new country, see if he doesn't." Nor did she ever forget the wanderer, but always hailed his return with gladness. Her boy rode with me in that post-chaise. He was going in to serve the King as a soldier. We had sat on the school bench together and fought together, to the loss of much learning, I fear, and to the loss of caste, too, with our teacher. But it befell that, when we met again under his mother's roof, when our hair that was brown had grown grizzled and gray, she saw us both distinguished by old King Christian as the two of our class who had made it proud. And she smiled a

THE WIFE OF THE MIDDLE-MILLER.

calm "I told you so." But that is another story, and we shall come to it.

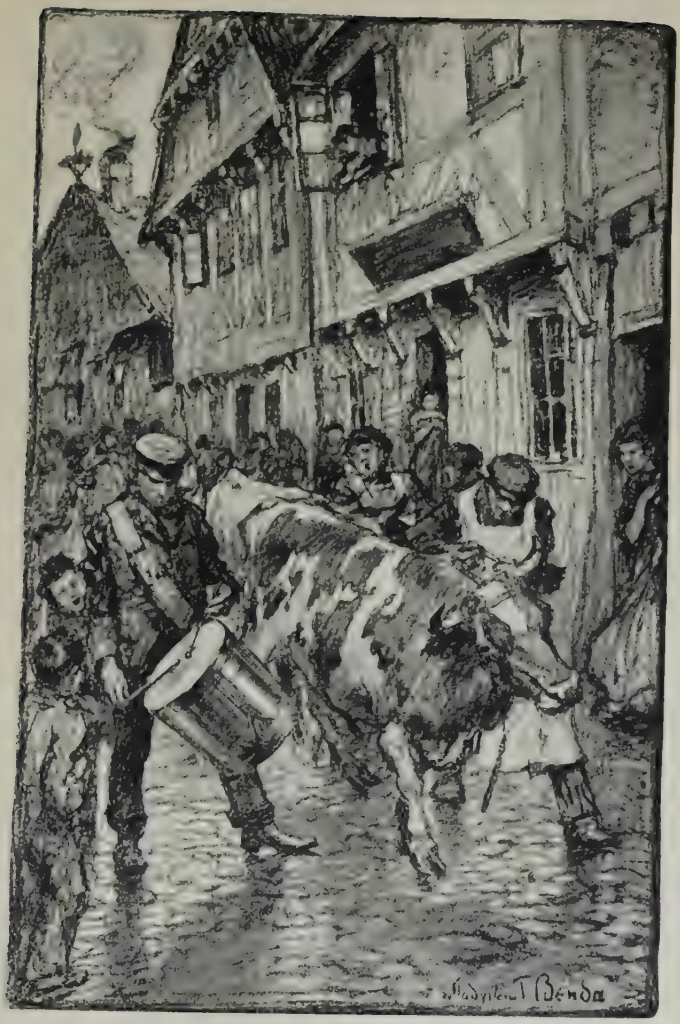
The people of the Old Town were like itself, simple and honest and good. None of them ever plumed themselves with stolen feathers. There was a bell-ringer at the Domkirke whom we boys dubbed Venus because of her exceeding ugliness. She was certainly the most hideous and withal the most good-natured girl I ever met. She accepted the name meekly as a part of her office, something pertaining to the job, and her smile reached from ear to ear when we hailed her by it in the street. Then there was a change. Her

VENUS.

employer died, and she lost her place. When next we met her and called her Venus, she protested soberly:

"I ain't Venus no more now, for I ain't by the kirk."

She ought logically to have descended from her ecclesiastical position to civil employment as the town bell-woman, but I am not sure she did. All public advertising was done in the Old Town through the medium of either the bell-woman or the drummer-man, the two official town-criers. There was a newspaper, to be sure, — indeed, it had been there for a hundred years and more, "privileged by the King," — but I think it came out only every other day. At all events, all matters of real human interest were promulgated through these two functionaries. They divided their duties fairly. She did the crying of fish and meat in the market, and such like, or if any one had lost anything. He, having been once a soldier, did the honors on ceremonial occasions, as when a fat steer, or a horse, was to be killed at the butcher's, good horse-meat being neither



"Did the honors on ceremonial occasions."

unwelcome on the poor man's table, nor unpalatable either. Then he led the procession through the town, proclaiming between rolls of his drum the virtues of the victim that stalked after, adorned with ribbons and flowers. The steer never took any interest in the proceedings. Perhaps a bovine tradition told it what was coming. But the horse took it all as a compliment, and walked in the procession with pride, as if he were a person of consequence.

Of characters the Old Town had had a full supply ever since the days when Anders Sörensen Vedel, who was a cleric attached to the Domkirke, translated Saxo Grammaticus with the Hamlet Saga into Danish from the original Latin. Being in straits for paper on which to print it, he called upon the Danish women through his friend, Tycho Brahe, the astronomer, to send their linen to the paper-mill lest the great work be lost to posterity. Vedel was a pious as well as a famous man, and it was his custom, in order to impress his children with the bitterness of the Passion, to call them into his study

on Good Friday and scourge them soundly. The scourge had no longer any pertinent relation to Good Friday in our day, though it was busy enough the year round. It helped us on our way to knowledge, or was supposed to, in the school, where "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was still an article of unquestioned faith. There was an evil tradition that a king in the early part of the century had once, on a visit, expressed wonder at the number of great and learned men that had come from it, and that the Rector had told him: "We have a little birch forest near, your Majesty. It helps, it helps!" It certainly labored faithfully. As to the results — but probably it is a subject without interest to my young readers, and since their elders have lost faith in it I shall let it alone, and be glad to.

Liar Hans, whom I spoke of, was one of the institutions of the town, along with Maren Dragoon, the apple woman, the memory of whose early flirtation with a dragoon — she was sixty and had a beard when I knew her — was thus perpetuated, and Hop-Carolina, so called because

one of her legs was shorter than the other. How and why Hans got his nickname, I don't know. I know that he hated us, probably for yelling it at him, and that he compelled me for a long time to go armed with a horse-whip for fear of him. The Liar was a professional skinner of cats. Women wore tanned catskins in those days as we wear chamois chest protectors, with the hairy side in, and this demand Liar Hans supplied. So he went about with a sack with dead cats in it, and from this brought up his ammunition when

LIAR HANS.

a fight befell, as it did whenever one of the Latin School boys hove in sight. Then the air was filled with cats that went back and forth till we ran; for Hans did not know the word surrender. He cornered me once in our own street, and there ensued a mighty combat between the Liar and his cats on one side, and myself and Othello, my dog, on the other, in which my horsewhip did great execution until we fled in disorderly retreat and got wedged in the doorway, the dog and I, where Hans laid it on both of us with a cat he had by the tail. My mother's exclamation of horror, as she came out to see what was the matter, set us free at last.

I have forgotten the name of the man who lived just out of town and kept bees. I cannot even remember whether he occupied the old manse at Lustrup or the Dam-house. It was one of them, I know. The thing I do remember is the shift he made to tend his bees without getting up with the sun as did they. The honey they gather on the heath when the broom is purple has a wild flavor which nothing can match, but

it is essential that they shall be about it early, while the morning sun is on the heather. For some reason they closed the hives at night, and some one had to open them at sunrise. The keeper was fond of lying late in bed, and it was laziness in this instance that was the mother of invention. He kept hens also, and their coop adjoined the hives. They were early risers too; he heard them jump down from their roosts when he ought to be out tending his bees. So he hit upon a contrivance, a sort of lever under the roost, which, when the hens jumped upon it, opened the hives and let the bees out. After that he could lie in bed and laugh while his husbandry went on. He was the only inventor I ever knew the Old Town to turn out, unless you count in the telegrapher who came when the wires had been strung to our coast. He was a lonesome, morose man, fond of taking long walks by himself. On one of his tramps a vagrant dog attached itself to him, and the two became friends. The telegrapher had the notion, however, that a well-behaved dog must trot obediently at its

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master's heels, and that he could not make his dog do. So he kept him half-starved, and when he went out, tied a piece of meat to the end of his stick. After that they were always seen together in the orthodox way, the dog sniffing industriously in his tracks as he strode along, looking neither to the right nor to the left. He was a very thin and ungainly man, who could look over a six-foot fence without standing on his toes, and the procession through the town was most singular. Of course we dubbed him "the Bone."

The old bookseller was there, whose birthday was a movable feast. The date had been lost, and as it was somewhere in the spring and he liked Whitsuntide, anyhow, he kept it on that Sunday, whenever it came. It was something to have even the sun get up and dance on your birthday. Perhaps that persuaded him. It was the tradition that you could see the sun skip for joy on the holy morning very early, in that latitude. Most people took the dance on trust and stayed in bed. And we had the funny German shoemaker whose bills were the gems of the

town. The one he sent to the factory owner's wife, who was a very fine and aristocratic lady, became its great classic. It ran thus:

"En Paar Stiefel

"Die Madame — Verschnudelt und hintergeflickt." [1]

There used to be a Postmaster in the Old Town who had a very quick and violent temper. The post-chaise was upset once when he was the only passenger, and in such a way that he was imprisoned within it and unable to open the door. He called in vain for help; the driver did not come. At that his gorge rose, and he shrieked angrily: "Niels! Niels! Where are you? Come at once."

"I cannot, Mr. Postmaster," Niels' voice spoke patiently from the ditch. "I am lying here with a broken leg."

"Hang your leg," yelled the angry man, from the chaise; "come at once, I tell you. I am lying here with a broken neck."

I was thinking less of the unreasonable Post-

[1] The Madam — Patched before and behind.

master than of the just anger of the district physician, who one day was called to deal with an emergency in a near-by farm-house, where all depended on letting in fresh air quickly. The patient lay in one of the horrible closet beds that always gave me a shiver, though they were often not so bad, if only there were not mice in the straw. Air there never was, could not be. The doctor ran to the window and tried to open it. It was nailed down; probably had not been opened since the house was built. Dr. P. was a hasty man, too, and here he had reason, for no time was to be lost. Looking around for something to smash the window with, his eye fell upon the farmer's silver-mounted meerschaum pipe, with a bowl as big as a man's fist and long elastic stem. The doctor seized it and, wielding it as a war club, smashed pane after pane and saved his patient. But the farmer sued him. The pipe was an heirloom and beyond price to him. It was the one thing that by the country-folk was valued higher than lands and cattle. The doctor lost his case, but he took the occasion

to inveigh effectually against the evil abuse of the cupboard beds that were closed tight with doors as often as with a curtain. When this last was so, it was rather to save the wood than the sleeper. And he lived to see them put under the ban, and to see windows made to open.

The pipe was, indeed, an indispensable part of the peasant's equipment. The boy of twelve had his sticking out of his side pocket, just like his father. They never stopped smoking except when they were haying, and I have seen a man mowing grass with his long pipe hanging from his mouth. They even counted distances by pipes instead of miles. A peasant would tell you, if you asked how far it was to the next town, that it was two pipes, or three pipes, as the case might be. How far that was, I have forgotten, but it was a safe enough way of reckoning. For they went always at the same jog-trot, and the pipe-bowls were always of the same size. They were of porcelain and gayly decorated. Among the young men there was a kind of rivalry as to who should have the handsomest pipe bowl; the

meerschaum was the holiday pipe, for home and festive occasions. And it was not only the country folk who smoked thus. Everybody did — the men, that is to say. It is only lately the women have taken to smoking cigars, and in public. When last I crossed the "Great Belt" on the steam-ferry, I was greatly annoyed at the sight of two handsome and otherwise nice young girls smoking cigarettes on the deck, and I took occasion to say so to a motherly woman who occupied the chair next to mine. She listened with polite interest to my diatribe about how things were when I was a boy, and when I had finished took out a cigar, a regular man's cigar.

"Yes!" she said, "things do change. Now, I like a smoke myself. These girls take after me, I suppose. They are my daughters." And she struck a match and lit her weed.

We boys in the Old Town were strictly prohibited from smoking under the school rules, which prescribed the rod for every such offence. In consequence, we did it on the sly, thinking it manly and fine. At his desk, at home, Father

smoked all the time, and so did everybody else. Many a pound of Kanaster have I carried home from the tobacconist's shop, the one in Grönnegade with the naked brown Indian smoking a very long pipe. From the moment the "Last of the Mohicans" fell into my hands I looked upon him as friend and brother. There was something between us which the grown-ups knew nothing about. He must be acquainted with Uncas and Chingachgook and Deerslayer, of course, for clearly he was of the good Delawares and not of the wicked Hurons. He swings from his hook yet, and I confess to a nodding acquaintance when I pass him in the street. His pipe is still the biggest part of him.

It was a part of everything. I mind many a time seeing our family doctor on the way to a country case, wrapped in his great fur coat and with the pipe between his teeth as he sat in his wagon chair. That was a still bigger part of the doctor's outfit: the great easy-chair that stood in the hall and was lifted into the farmer's wagon where it hung suspended from the sideboards.

Farm wagons in those days were not made with springs. With his collar up about his ears, his cap pulled down and "fire up," the doctor could sleep comfortably on the longest and coldest ride, and he had need. For there were few nights when he was not called out for one. It was hard work for very poor pay. Father, with a family of fifteen and errand for the doctor every day, and sometimes all day, paid our family physician, I think, not over fifty daler a year, which is half that in American dollars. But it was not a matter of dollars. Money could not pay what our doctor gave us. He was the family friend before he was the physician. He smoothed the pillow of suffering, and the last agony was made easier because he sat by. Grown old and slow of gait, he goes his rounds yet in the Old Town that will be my Old Town no longer when I look for him in vain on his morning route. And where he goes, to the rich man's house or the poor man's hut, sunshine and hope come with him.

I have said that in Ribe one seemed to be always bordering upon the way past because of

The Old Family Doctor.

the track it had made everywhere, the many landmarks it had set. There was another reason; namely, that so many old people lived there who in themselves made a link connecting the town with days long gone. Their lives seemed to reach straight back and lay hold of it visibly. People grew older in the Old Town than anywhere I know of, as if they were loath to let go of it. There seemed to be no good reason why they should die, and so they lived and lived, and some of them are living yet. The old Bishop, whom we all loved and revered, was 92 when I saw him vault with the agility of a young man over a beam some carpenters had left in his way. He was the father-in-law of Dr. Niels Finsen, whom all the world knows. Dr. Finsen's father was Amtmand in Ribe in his day, and his picture in uniform hangs in the Town Hall. Bishop Balslev and King Christian had grown old together, and were friends. When the Bishop thought his charge required a younger man, he asked the King to appoint his successor. "Not while I live," said the King, and he kept his word. He

outlived his friend, who was in sight of the century post when his relief came.

There was scarce a street in the Old Town where some kindly old face did not look out upon you with patient eyes that spoke of things unseen by the crowd, of friends long waiting in the beyond. In the Cloister[1] there were always one or two old women that were nearing the hundred. The keeper himself was in the nineties. They crept about, the old men with their staffs in the sunshiny garden patches; the women sat at their curtained windows, busy with sewing or knitting. For there were ever small trousers to be patched and small feet to be shod with warm socks for the winter, if not in their own home then in many a one about them. And the Old Town loved them. Some day we heard that they slept, and we bound wreaths for our friends and strewed the

[1] The old building was a hospital for centuries after the Reformation drove out the monks, and for a season served as an insane asylum. We children used to steal up to the tarred board fence that enclosed its grounds and, gluing our eyes to a knot hole, shudder deliciously at the sight of the poor wretches. It was eventually turned into an Old Ladies Home, and the name of the "Cloister" was restored to it.

street with wintergreen and spruce, and walked, singing, their last journey with them, while all the church bells rang and friends carried the tired body.

"They crept about, the old men with their staffs."

"Ashes to ashes — dust to dust."

But there was no pain in the parting, for in the living there had been no discord. The welcome of the grave was peace.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTMAS SHEAF.

I DO not know how the forty years I have been away have dealt with "Jule-nissen," the Christmas elf of my childhood. He was pretty old then, gray and bent, and there were signs that his time was nearly over. So it may be that they have laid him away. I shall find out when I go over there next time. When I was a boy we never sat down to our Christmas Eve dinner until a bowl of rice and milk had

been taken up to the attic, where he lived with the marten and its young, and kept an eye upon the house — saw that everything ran smoothly. I never met him myself, but I know the house-cat must have done so. No doubt they were well acquainted; for when in the morning I went in for the bowl, there it was, quite dry and licked clean, and the cat purring in the corner. So, being there all night, he must have seen and likely talked with him.

I suspect, as I said, that they have not treated my Nisse fairly in these matter-of-fact days that have come upon us, not altogether for our own good, I fear. I am not even certain that they were quite serious about him then, though to my mind that was very unreasonable. But then there is nothing so unreasonable to a child as the cold reason of the grown-ups. However, if they have gone back on him, I know where to find him yet. Only last Christmas when I talked of him to the tenement-house mothers in my Henry Street Neighborhood House,[1] — all of them from

[1] The Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement, New York.

the ever faithful isle, — I saw their eyes light up with the glad smile of recognition, and half a dozen called out excitedly, "The Little People! the Leprecawn ye mean, we know him well," and they were not more pleased than I to find that we had an old friend in common. For the Nisse, or the Leprecawn, call him whichever you like, was a friend indeed to those who loved kindness and peace. If there was a house in which contention ruled, either he would have nothing to do with it, like the stork that built its nest on the roof, or else he paid the tenants back in their own coin, playing all kinds of tricks upon them and making it very uncomfortable. I suppose it was this trait that gave people, when they began to reason so much about things, the notion that he was really the wraith, as it were, of their own disposition, which was not so at all. I remember the story told of one man who quarrelled with everybody, and in consequence had a very troublesome Nisse in the house that provoked him to the point of moving away; which he did. But as the load of furniture was going down the

THE NISSE.

street, with its owner hugging himself in glee at the thought that he had stolen a march on the Nisse, the little fellow poked his head out of the load and nodded to him, "We are moving to-day." At which naturally he flew into a great rage. But then, that was just a story.

The Nisse was of the family, as you see, very much of it, and certainly not to be classed with the cattle. Yet they were his special concern; he kept them quiet, and saw to it, when the stableman forgot, that they were properly bedded and cleaned and fed. He was very well known to the hands about the farm, and they said that he looked just like a little old man, all in gray and with a pointed red nightcap and long gray beard. He was always civilly treated, as he surely deserved to be, but Christmas was his great holiday, when he became part of it, indeed, and was made much of. So, for that matter, was everything that lived under the husbandman's roof, or within reach of it. The farmer always set a lighted candle in his window on Christmas Eve, to guide the lonesome wanderer to a hospitable hearth.

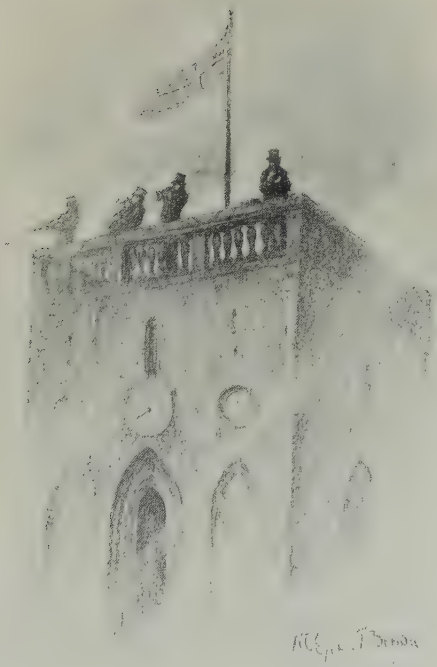
The very sparrows that burrowed in the straw thatch, and did it no good, were not forgotten. A sheaf of rye was set out in the snow for them, so that on that night at least they should have shelter and warmth unchallenged, and plenty to eat. At all other times we were permitted to raid their nests and help ourselves to a sparrow roast, which was by long odds the greatest treat we had. Thirty or forty of them, dug out of any old thatch roof by the light of the stable lantern and stuffed into Ane's long stocking, which we had borrowed for a game-bag, made a meal for the whole family, each sparrow a fat mouthful. Ane was the cook, and I am very certain that her pot-roast of sparrow would pass muster at any Fifth Avenue restaurant as the finest dish of reed-birds that ever was. However, at Christmas their sheaf was their sanctuary, and no one as much as squinted at them. Only last winter when Christmas found me stranded in a little Michigan town, wandering disconsolate about the streets, I came across such a sheaf raised on a pole in a door-yard, and I knew at once that one of my people

lived in that house and kept Yule in the old way. So I felt as if I were not quite a stranger.

All the animals knew perfectly well that the holiday had come, and kept it in their way. The watch-dog was unchained. In the midnight hour on the Holy Eve the cattle stood up in their stalls and bowed out of respect and reverence for Him who was laid in a manger when there was no room in the inn, and in that hour speech was given them, and they talked together. Claus, our neighbor's man, had seen and heard it, and every Christmas Eve I meant fully to go and be there when it happened; but always long before that I had been led away to bed, a very sleepy boy, with all my toys hugged tight, and when I woke up the daylight shone through the frosted window-panes, and they were blowing good morning from the church tower; it would be a whole year before another Christmas. So I vowed, with a sigh at having neglected a really sacred observance, that I would be there sure on the next Christmas Eve. But it was always so, every year, and perhaps it was just as well, for Claus said that it might go

ill with the one who listened, if the cows found him out.

Blowing in the Yule from the grim old tower that had stood eight hundred years against the blasts of the North Sea was one of the customs of the Old Town that abide, however it fares with the Nisse; that I know. At sun-up, while yet the people were at breakfast, the town band climbed the many steep ladders to the top of the tower, and up there, in fair weather or foul, — and sometimes it blew great guns from the wintry sea, — they played four old hymns, one to each corner of the compass, so that no one was forgotten. They always began with Luther's sturdy challenge, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," while down below we listened devoutly. There was something both weird and beautiful about those far-away strains in the early morning light of the northern winter, something that was not of earth and that suggested to my child's imagination the angels' song on far Judean hills. Even now, after all these years, the memory of it does that. It could not have been because the music was so



"Blowing in Yule from the grim old tower."

rare, for the band was made up of small store-keepers and artisans who thus turned an honest penny on festive occasions. Incongruously enough, I think, the official town mourner who bade people to funerals was one of them. It was like the burghers' guard, the colonel of which — we thought him at least a general, because of the huge brass sword he trailed when he marched at the head of his men — was the town tailor, a very small but very martial man. But whether or no, it was beautiful. I have never heard music since that so moved me. When the last strain died away came the big bells with their deep voices that sang far out over field and heath, and our Yule was fairly under way.

A whole fortnight we kept it. Real Christmas was from Little Christmas Eve, which was the night before the Holy Eve proper, till New Year. Then there was a week of supplementary festivities before things slipped back into their wonted groove. That was the time of parties and balls. The great ball of the year was on the day after Christmas. Second Christ-

mas Day we called it, when all the quality attended at the club-house, where the Amtmand and the Burgomaster, the Bishop and the Rector of the Latin School, did the honors and received the people. That was the grandest of the town functions. The school ball, late in autumn, was the jolliest, for then the boys invited each the girl he liked best, and the older people were guests and outsiders, so to speak. The Latin School, still the "Cathedral School," was as old as the Domkirke itself, and when it took the stage it was easily first while it lasted. The Yule ball, though it was a rather more formal affair, for all that was neither stiff nor tiresome; nothing was in the Old Town; there was too much genuine kindness for that. And then it was the recognized occasion when matches were made by enterprising mammas, or by the young themselves, and when engagements were declared and discussed as the great news of the day. We heard of all those things afterward and thought a great fuss was being made over nothing much. For when a young couple were

declared engaged, that meant that there was no more fun to be got out of them. They were given, after that, to go mooning about by themselves and to chasing us children away when we ran across them; until they happily returned to their senses, got married, and became reasonable human beings once more.

When we had been sent to bed on the great night, Father and Mother went away in their Sunday very best, and we knew they would not return until two o'clock in the morning, a fact which alone invested the occasion with unwonted gravity, for the Old Town kept early hours. At ten o'clock, when the watchman droned his sleepy lay, absurdly warning the people to

> Be quick and bright,
> Watch fire and light,
> Our clock it has struck ten,

it was ordinarily tucked in and asleep. But that night we lay awake a long time listening to the muffled sound of heavy wheels in the snow rolling unceasingly past, and trying to picture to ourselves the grandeur they conveyed. Every

carriage in the town was then in use and doing overtime. I think there were as many as four.

When we were not dancing or playing games, we literally ate our way through the two holiday weeks. Pastry by the mile did we eat, and general indigestion brooded over the town when it emerged into the white light of the new year. At any rate it ought to have done so. It is a prime article of faith with the Danes to this day that for any one to go out of a friend's house, or of anybody's house, in the Christmas season without partaking of its cheer, is to "bear away their Yule," which no one must do on any account. Every house was a bakery from the middle of December until Christmas Eve, and oh! the quantities of cakes we ate, and such cakes! We were sixteen normally, in our home, and Mother mixed the dough for her cakes in a veritable horse-trough kept for that exclusive purpose. As much as a sack of flour went in, I guess, and gallons of molasses and whatever else went to the mixing. For weeks there had been long

and anxious speculations as to "what Father would do," and gloomy conferences between him and Mother over the state of the family pocket-book, which was never plethoric; but at last the joyful message ran through the house from attic to kitchen that the appropriation had been made, "even for citron," which meant throwing all care to the winds. The thrill of it, when we children stood by and saw the generous avalanche going into the trough! What would not come out of it! The whole family turned to and helped make the cakes and cut the "pepper-nuts," which were little squares of spiced cake-dough we played cards for and stuffed our pockets with, gnawing them incessantly. Talk about eating between meals: ours was a continuous performance for two solid weeks. The pepper-nuts were the real staple of Christmas to us children. We paid forfeits with them in the game of scratch-nose (jackstraws), when the fellow fishing for his straw stirred the others and had his nose scratched with the little file in the bunch as extra penalty; in "Under which tree lies my pig?" in which the pig

was a pepper-nut, the fingers of the closed hands the trees; and in Black Peter. In this last the loser had his nose blackened with the snuff from the candle until advancing civilization substituted a burnt cork. Christmas without pepper-nuts would have been a hollow mockery indeed. We rolled the dough in long strings like slender eels and then cut it, a little on the bias. They were good, those nuts, when baked brown. I wish I had some now.

It all stood for the universal desire that in the joyous season everybody be made glad. I know that in the Old Town no one went hungry or cold during the holidays, if indeed any one ever did. Every one gave of what he had, and no one was afraid of pauperizing anybody by his gifts, for they were given gladly and in love, and that makes all the difference — did then and does now. At Christmas it is perfectly safe to let our scientific principles go and just remember the Lord's command that we love one another. I subscribe to them all with perfect loyalty, and try to practise them till Christmas week comes

in with its holly and the smell of balsam and fir, and the memories of childhood in the Old Town; then — well, anyway, it is only a little while. New Year and the long cold winter come soon enough.

Christmas Eve was, of course, the great and blessed time. That was the one night in the year when in the gray old Domkirke services were held by candle-light. A myriad wax candles twinkled in the gloom, but did not dispel it. It lingered under the great arches where the voice of the venerable minister, the responses of the congregation, and above it all the boyish treble of the choir billowed and strove, now dreamily with the memories of ages past, now sharply, tossed from angle to corner in the stone walls, and again in long thunderous echoes, sweeping all before it on the triumphant strains of the organ, like a victorious army with banners crowding through the halls of time. So it sounded to me, as sleep gently tugged at my eyelids. The air grew heavy with the smell of evergreens and of burning wax, and as the thunder of war drew

farther and farther away, in the shadow of the great pillars stirred the phantoms of mailed knights whose names were hewn in the grave-stones there. We youngsters clung to the skirts of Mother as we went out and the great doors fell to behind us. And yet those Christmas Eves, with Mother's gentle eyes forever inseparable from them, and with the glad cries of Merry Christmas ringing all about, have left a touch of sweet peace in my heart which all the years have not effaced, nor ever will.

At home the great dinner of the year was waiting for us: roast goose stuffed with apples and prunes, rice pudding with cinnamon and sugar on it, and a great staring butter eye in the middle. The pudding was to lay the ground-work with, and it was served in deep soup-plates. It was the dish the Nisse came in on, and the cat. On New Year's Eve both these were left out; but to make up for it an almond was slipped into the "gröd," and whoever found it in his plate got a present. It was no device to make people "fletch," but it served the purpose admirably. At Christmas we

"The whole family turned to and helped."

had doughnuts after the goose, big and stout and good. However I managed it, I don't know, but it is a tradition in the family, and I remember it well, that I once ate thirteen on top of the big dinner. Evidently I was having a good time. Dinner was, if not the chief end of man, at least an item in his make-up, and a big one.[1]

When it had had time to settle and all the kitchen work was done, Father took his seat at the end of the long table, with all the household gathered about, the servants included and the baby without fail, and read the story of The Child: "And it came to pass in those days," while Mother hushed the baby. Then we sang together "A Child is Born in Bethlehem," which was the simplest of our hymns, and also the one we children loved best, for it told of how in heaven we were to walk to church

On sky-blue carpets, star-bedeckt,

[1] The reader who is not afraid of dyspepsia by suggestion may consider the following Christmas bill of fare which obtained among the peasants east of the Old Town: On a large trencher a layer of pork and ribs, on top of that a nest of fat sausages, in which sat a roast duck.

which was a great comfort. Children love beautiful things, and we had few of them. The great and precious treasure in our house was the rag carpet in the spare room which we were allowed to enter only on festive occasions such as Christmas. It had an orange streak in it which I can see to this day. Whenever I come across one that even remotely suggests it, it gives me yet a kind of solemn feeling. We had no piano, — that was a luxury in those days, — and Father was not a singer, but he led on bravely with his tremulous bass and we all joined in, Ane the cook and Maria the housemaid furtively wiping their eyes with their aprons, for they were good and pious folk and this was their Christmas service. So we sang the ten verses to end, with their refrain "Hallelujah! hallelujah," that always seemed to me to open the very gates of Yule.

And it did, literally; for when the last hallelujah died away the door of the spare room was flung wide and there stood the Christmas tree, all shining lights, and the baby was borne in,

"We joined hands and danced around the tree."

wide-eyed, to be the first, as was proper; for was not this The Child's holiday? Unconsciously we all gave way to those who were nearest Him, who had most recently come from His presence and were therefore in closest touch with the spirit of the holiday. So, when we joined hands and danced around the tree, Father held the baby, and we laughed and were happy as the little one crowed his joy and stretched the tiny arms toward the light.

Light and shadow, joy and sorrow, go hand in hand in the world. While we danced and made merry, there was one near for whom Christmas was but grief and loss. Out in the white fields he went from farm to farm, a solitary wanderer, the folklore had it, looking for plough or harrow on which to rest his weary limbs. It was the Wandering Jew, to whom this hope was given, that, if on that night of all in the year he could find some tool used in honest toil over which the sign of the cross had not been made, his wanderings would be at an end and the curse depart from him, to cleave thenceforward to the luckless

farmer.[1] He never found what he sought in my time. The thrifty husbandman had been over his field on the eve of the holiday with a watchful eye to his coming. When the bell in the distant church tower struck the midnight hour, belated travellers heard his sorrowful wail as he fled over the heath and vanished.

When Ansgarius preached the White Christ to the vikings of the North, so runs the legend of the Christmas tree, the Lord sent His three messengers, Faith, Hope, and Love, to help light the first tree. Seeking one that should be high as hope, wide as love, and that bore the sign of the cross on every bough, they chose the balsam fir, which best of all the trees in the forest met the requirements. Perhaps that is a good reason why there clings about the Christmas tree in my old home that which has preserved it from being swept along in the flood of senseless luxury that has swamped so many things in our money-mad

[1] An unromantic variation of this was the belief that the farmer who left his plough out on Christmas would get a drubbing from his wife within a twelvemonth. I hope whoever held to that got what he richly deserved.

day. At least so it was then. Every time I see a tree studded with electric lights, garlands of tinsel-gold festooning every branch, and hung with the hundred costly knicknacks the store-keepers invent year by year "to make trade," until the tree itself disappears entirely under its burden, I have a feeling what a fraud has been practised on the kindly spirit of Yule. Wax candles are the only real thing for a Christmas tree, candles of *wax* that mingle their perfume with that of the burning fir, not the by-product of some coal-oil or other abomination. What if the boughs do catch fire; they can be watched, and too many candles are tawdry, anyhow. Also, red apples, oranges, and old-fashioned cornucopias made of colored paper, and made at home, look a hundred times better and fitter in the green; and so do drums and toy trumpets and wald-horns, and a rocking-horse reined up in front that need not have cost forty dollars, or anything like it.

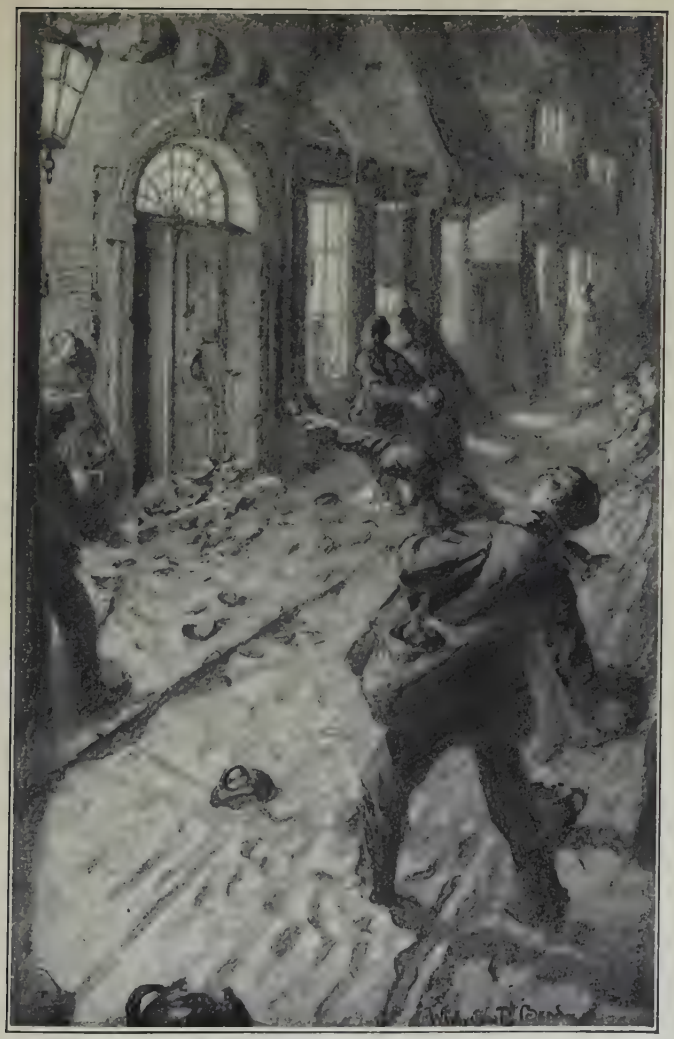
I am thinking of one, or rather two, a little piebald team with a wooden seat between, for

which Mother certainly did not give over seventy-five cents at the store, that as "Belcher and Mamie" — the names were bestowed on the beasts at sight by Kate, aged three, who bossed the play-room — gave a generation of romping children more happiness than all the expensive railroads and trolley-cars and steam-engines that are considered indispensable to keeping Christmas nowadays. And the Noah's Ark with Noah and his wife and all the animals that went two by two — ah, well! I haven't set out to preach a sermon on extravagance that makes no one happier, but I wish — The legend makes me think of the holly that grew in our Danish woods. We called it Christ-thorn, for to us it was of that the crown of thorns was made with which the cruel soldiers mocked our Saviour, and the red berries were the drops of blood that fell from His anguished brow. Therefore the holly was a sacred tree, and to this day the woods in which I find it seem to me like the forest where the Christmas roses bloomed in the night when the Lord was born, different from all other woods, and better.

Mistletoe was rare in Denmark. There was known to be but one oak in all the land on which it grew. But that did not discourage the young. We had our kissing games which gave the boys and girls their chance to choose sides, and in the Christmas season they went on right merrily. There was rarely a night that did not bring the children together under some roof or other. They say that kissing goes by favor, but we had not arrived at that point yet, though we had our preferences. In the game of Post Office, for instance, he was a bold boy who would dare call out the girl he really liked, to get the letter that was supposed to be awaiting her. You could tell for a dead certainty who was his choice by watching whom he studiously avoided asking for. I have a very vivid recollection of having once really dared with sudden desperation, and of the defiant flushed face, framed in angry curls, that confronted me in the hall, the painful silence while we each stood looking the other way and heard our playmates tittering behind the closed door, — for well they knew, — and her indignant

stride as she went back to her seat unkissed, with me trailing behind, feeling like a very sheepish boy, and no doubt looking the part.

The Old Year went out with much such a racket as we make nowadays, but of quite a different kind. We did not blow the New Year in, we "smashed" it in. When it was dark on New Year's Eve, we stole out with all the cracked and damaged crockery of the year that had been hoarded for the purpose and, hieing ourselves to some favorite neighbor's door, broke our pots against it. Then we ran, but not very far or very fast, for it was part of the game that if one was caught at it, he was to be taken in and treated to hot doughnuts. The smashing was a mark of favor, and the citizen who had most pots broken against his door was the most popular man in town. When I was in the Latin School, a cranky burgomaster, whose door had been freshly painted, gave orders to the watchmen to stop it and gave them an unhappy night, for they were hard put to it to find a way it was safe to look, with the streets full of the best citizens in town, and their



"We 'smashed' the New Year in."

wives and daughters, sneaking singly by with bulging coats on their way to salute a friend. That was when our mothers — those who were not out smashing in New Year — came out strong, after the fashion of mothers. They baked more doughnuts than ever that night, and beckoned the watchman in to the treat; and there he sat, blissfully deaf while the street rang with the thunderous salvos of our raids; until it was discovered that the burgomaster himself was on patrol, when there was a sudden rush from kitchen doors and a great scurrying through streets that grew strangely silent.

The town had its revenge, however. The burgomaster, returning home in the midnight hour, stumbled in his gate over a discarded Christmas tree hung full of old boots and many black and sooty pots that went down around him with great smash in the upset, so that his family came running out in alarm to find him sprawling in the midst of the biggest celebration of all. His dignity suffered a shock which he never got over quite. But it killed the New Year's fun, too.

For he was really a good fellow, and then he was the burgomaster, and chief of police to boot. I suspect the fact was that the pot smashing had run its course. Perhaps the supply of pots was giving out; we began to use tinware more about that time. That was the end of it, anyhow.

We boys got square, too, with the watchmen. We knew their habit of stowing themselves away in the stage-coach that stood in the market-place when they had cried the hour at ten o'clock, and we caught them napping there one dark night when we were coming home from a party. The stage had doors that locked on the outside. We slammed them shut and ran the conveyance, with them in it wildly gesticulating from the windows, through the main street of the town, amid the cheers of the citizens whom the racket aroused from their slumbers. We were safe enough. The watchmen were not anxious to catch us, maddened as they were by our prank, and they were careful not to report us either. I chuckled at that exploit more than once when, in years long after, I went the rounds of the mid-

"We caught them napping there one dark night."

night streets with Haroun-al-Roosevelt, as they called New York's Police Commissioner, to find his patrolmen sleeping soundly on their posts when they should have been catching thieves. Human nature, police human nature, anyhow, is not so different, after all, in the old world and in the new.

With Twelfth Night our Yule came to an end. In that night, if a girl would know her fate, she must go to bed walking backward and throw a shoe over her left shoulder, or hide it under her pillow, I forget which, perhaps both, and say aloud a verse that prayed the Three Holy Kings to show her the man

Whose table I must set,
Whose bed I must spread,
Whose name I must bear,
Whose bride I must be.

The man who appeared to her in her sleep was to be her husband. There was no escape from it, and consequently she did not try. He was her Christmas gift, and she took him for better or for worse. Let us hope that the Nisse played her no scurvy trick, and that it was for better always.

CHAPTER V

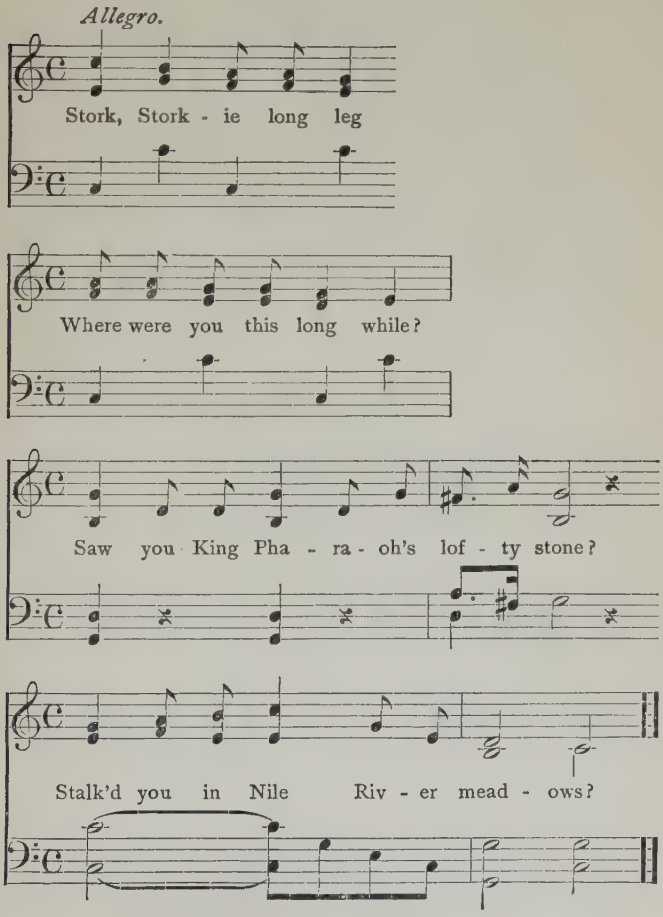
GETTING READY FOR THE REVIEW.

THE stork came in April, with delivery from the vile tyranny of March. Talk of March violets! to us the month meant cod-liver oil. It was our steady dessert all through it. Good for the system, they said. Perhaps it was. I think it encouraged duplicity. The rule was that when we had grown to like it so that we licked the spoon after it, we might quit. You wouldn't believe how quickly we came to adore it. However, when our need was greatest, the stork came, and with it balmy spring and our freedom. Not necessarily all at once: three times the stork had to have snow in its nest to make things right; but we knew the sunshine was not far away.

One day we heard it on its nest, jabbering out

The stork came in April.

a noisy "How d'do" through its long red bill, and then we children gathered below and sang our song of welcome:


Allegro.
Stork, Stork - ie long leg
Where were you this long while?
Saw you King Pha - ra - oh's lof - ty stone?
Stalk'd you in Nile Riv - er mead - ows?

The swallow and the starling were not far behind it. They were all our tenants and lived under our roof, or on it, but the stork was the only one who paid rent formally. Payment was made in kind. Every other year he threw an egg out of the nest, and the next year a fledgling stork. For the rest he held aloof, disdaining haughtily to hold communication of any kind with us. Even when a disabled stork became, by force of circumstances, a member of the household, residing in the hen-house through the winter, he never grew familiar, but accepted what was given to him with quiet reserve as from a subject people; which, of course, was his right, seeing that he was a public functionary of the first importance. We had no stork on our house, but both our neighbors did, and as if to make up for the apparent slight, he was a regular visitor in our family. They seemed to always know when he was coming, and when I was told of it, I never failed to leave a Tvebak for him in the window which the nurse had left open so that he should not wake up the whole house by rapping on the pane with his bill.

And when it was gone in the morning, I knew that a little brother had come to join our company; and sure enough it was so.

The swallow sang for us, and we saw to it that his way out and in of the hallway where he built his nest was free, by leaving a pane out of the transom. If by any chance that was obstructed, we knew it by his flying up and down before the doorway, waiting anxiously for some one to open it, that he might slip in where a string of little round heads, always set in a straight row, were clamoring with wide-open bills for flies and gnats. When the starling sang his evening song in the big poplar, the Old Town was white with the bloom of the elder. He left it dyed a deep purple, for he was as fond of elderberries as we were of the soup our mothers made of them, and the stain of them abides. In between the blossoming and the berrying when his youngsters were grown, he took himself off with his wife for several weeks, leaving only the children behind. To France, it was said, he went, and to Mediterranean olive groves, where they hunted him as a nuisance.

We loved him and gave him sanctuary. And he helped the farmer in turn by ridding his field of pests. Where a flock of starlings settled down for luncheon, no wriggling thing remained to tell the tale.

By the time the stork was settled on the Rector's house and busy repairing his nest, our boyish eyes turned speculatively toward the swelling buds of the pear tree that hung temptingly over the narrow way to the Latin School, and we tried to estimate how many of them had pears in them, and what were the chances of their happening to hit us as they fell, later on. Our daily walk took the direction of the Castle Hill, and turned off at the big buckthorn hedge to the river where we swam in summer. The cowslips were in the meadows then, and forget-me-nots grew on the bank where the rushes nodded to the waters going out to the sea, as if they would like to go too, but, being unable, gave them a message of cheer and good luck on the way. And the spring birds called to each other in the meadows. Then the bright nights were at hand. They

came, as night does in the hot countries, suddenly. You saw in the almanac — the 6th of May, I think it was — that they were due, and that night, or the next if it was clear, you noticed a something in the atmosphere that was different. You walked with a lighter step, and your glance strayed constantly to the west, where the light never quite went out, but kept moving round north, to hail the coming day in the east. And every morning it came earlier and left later, till St. John's Day was passed, when the days again began to grow shorter. Then one night in early August, when we walked abroad on the causeway, we knew that the summer was soon over. The light had gone out of the sky, as suddenly as it came, and the world was changed.

There lives in my memory such an evening in after years. I had been home — for ever the Old Town remained home to one whose cradle was rocked there — and was going my farewell rounds among the old people and the old places before packing off with the stork and his family. My way took me past the Castle Hill in the early

twilight. A man stood up there, a lonely figure sharply outlined against the light that was fading out of the western sky. He stood watching it as if he would hold it fast if he could, never stirring once while the warm pink changed to a steely gray, cold as the moonlight on Arctic ice. Behind him the town lay buried in its shadows. I almost fancied I saw him shiver as they crept up the hill to close him in their long night. I knew him, a schoolmate of mine, a man in good position who had remained unmarried and was now past middle age, always a lonesome sort of fellow. He stood there yet when the houses shut him out of my sight, and I did not see him again. Three days later, on the day we sailed from Copenhagen, I heard that he was dead. He had killed himself, no one knew why. He was comfortable as the world goes, and there was no explanation of his act, they said. To me none was needed. The picture of him standing there alone, the twilight of summer and of life closing in upon him, rose up before me, and I thought I understood.

With the coming of the bright nights the Old Town grew young again. Its staid habits were laid aside; the watchmen cried the bedtime hour in vain. At all hours of the night, till the midnight bell sounded and sometimes later, young and old were abroad, on the causeway, in the Plantage, or driving to the shore and taking their supper there. The young rowed and sang on the river in the long glowing twilight and had a good time. School and university were closed, and the students came back to visit old friends and to make love. With midsummer came "Holme week," of which more hereafter, when they all went out and sported in the hay together. An endless procession of young couples have driven home on the hay wagons, watching the midnight glow in the northern heavens from the top of the load, hand in hand, and thinking earth a newfound paradise for Two, while Cupid laughed at the ferry-landing to see them go. In Holme week he was always a regular boarder with the ferrymaster. But the young never suspected it, or if they did, showed no fear; and their elders, who

knew, having met him there in their time, held their peace. I am not sure that they did not even surreptitiously pay his board. For they were sly, the good people of the Old Town.

Early in August the young storks began to gather on the high roof of the Cloister church, and every day we saw them manœuvring there in agitated rows, between practice flights into the fields that grew longer and longer toward the time for their departure. At the final review, we knew, any of them that could not fly well enough and far enough would be killed by the rest, for no laggards were wanted on their long trip to King Pharaoh's land. We watched them soaring high, high up, and hoped fervently that our own stork, or the neighbor's we knew so well, might pass muster and not be stabbed to death with those long bills which we had seen carrying home snakes and frogs and lizards to the nest so often, and always raised in loud thanksgiving as the feast was spread before the brood. Then they seemed the gentlest of birds; but all at once the red beaks became swords to our imagination, to

A Girl from the North Sea Islands.

pierce the helpless youngster who got a bad report at his "exam." Every day we looked to see if they were all there and were glad when none was missing. Then one morning we looked out, and the Cloister roof was bare. The storks were gone. Every nest in the town was empty. We searched awhile, incredulous; then, with a little shiver, went to look up our skates and our mittens.

Before we had use for them, however, came the annual fair in September. The Ribe Fair was famous throughout the middle ages, when the town was the chief seaport of the country. Then merchants came from far and near, and the court bought its purple and fine linen of them. In our day it had dwindled, as had the Old Town itself, until barely a baker's dozen of traders from abroad brought their wares. But the Ribe merchants built their booths in the Square, and there came embroideries from Schleswig, pottery from the country to the north — the black "Jute pots," that alone were deemed fit to cook in by a careful housewife. The woman who served fried eels,

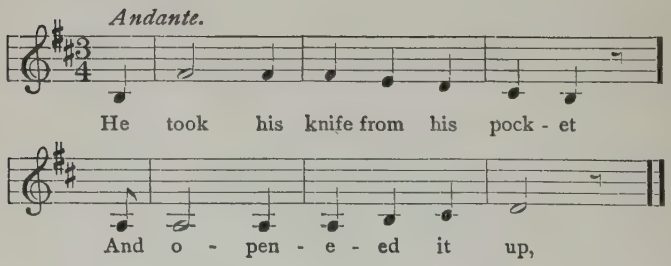
and coffee out of a copper kettle with rock sugar in lumps, — lovely lumps, strung on a thread, can I ever forget! — sat at the Cat-head Door of the Domkirke. To us she was as much of an institution as the Domkirke itself and twice as important, for she came only once a year, while the church was there all the time. In the narrow lane between the booths multitudes of farm-folk swarmed, togged out in their best, admiring it all and meeting friends at every step. The blue of the border gendarmes and the red and green of the Fanö girls made a pretty picture. The Fair was in fact the great opportunity of the country folk for social intercourse in the days when newspapers were rare, railroad and telegraph as yet to come, and a letter an event news of which spread through a country neighborhood and was discussed at its firesides in all its probable bearings. The peasants came to the Fair, the men to dicker and trade, if nothing else their pipes, it being understood that a treat went with the trade, so that they became speedily mellow and sometimes loud over the tavern board. The

"THERE WERE BOOTHS WITH TOYS AND BOOTHS WITH TRUMPETS."

women laid in their supply of ribbons, calico, and such like for the year, heard and discussed the news of weddings, christenings, and funerals; and the foundation of many a match was laid with a parting invitation to the prospective suitor to "come and see the farm" as the next step in the negotiations.

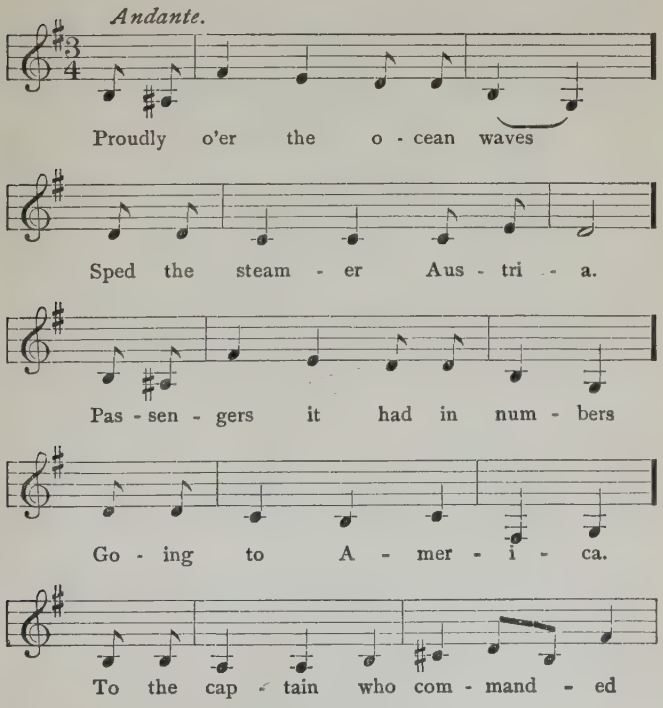
To us children it was all an enchanted land. There were booths with toys and booths with trumpets and booths with great "honey-cakes" with an almond heart right in the middle. No such cakes are made nowadays, and the trumpets in the toy-shops send forth no such blasts of rapture as did those we bought at the Fair in the Old Town and blew till our cheeks bulged and our eyes stared with the strain. Up and down we trooped, through lane after lane, dragging weary but happy mothers in our wake, trumpeting — I can hear those peals across all the toilsome years. Tin horns—bah! Those were *trumpets*, I tell you, red and green and silver-shine. And at last we brought up in front of the Great Panorama and stopped, breathless, to look and listen.

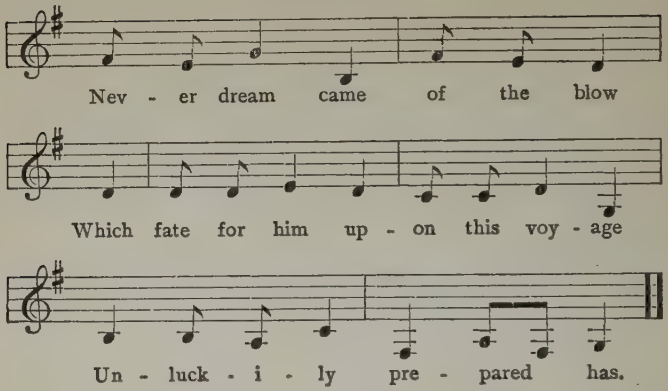
The panorama man kept no booth. He was above it. His entire outfit consisted of a sheet of canvas hung upon a pole and painted all over with the scenes he sang about. For he was a singer, the nineteenth-century descendant of the Skjald of our forefathers; far descended, alas! his song was ever about murder and horror on sea and land. He was the real precursor of the yellow press—pictures, songs, and all. Whether he made the latter up himself, or merely sang the ballad of the day, I do not know. If it was not about a man who took his girl to a dance and, getting her aside,



preparatory to stabbing her with great detail and deliberation, then it dealt with the latest world horror, the full circumstances of which

were set forth in lurid words, and even more lurid paint, on the canvas. Thus, for instance, the burning of the emigrant steamer *Austria* in mid-ocean. I can see him now, slapping the canvas with his rattan, and hear every inflection of his strident voice as he drew attention to the picture of it steaming peacefully along, and sang:


Andante.
Proudly o'er the o - cean waves
Sped the steam - er Aus - tri - a.
Pas - sen - gers it had in num - bers
Go - ing to A - mer - i - ca.
To the cap - tain who com - mand - ed



Then the fire and the horror, the women throwing the children overboard and being swallowed up by yellow and crimson flames that sent grewsome thrills up and down our backbones — and then the hat passed around for the troubadour. His was the *pièce de résistance* of the Fair, and we went home, when we had heard him through, impressed that we had heard the heart of the great world throb.

Besides the Fair which in olden times was known as Our Lady's Fair, perhaps because of the Domkirke,[1] in the shadow of which it was held, more likely because it came on the Virgin's feast-day, there were two other kinds, the cattle fairs and

[1] The Church of Our Lady was its official title.

THE GIRL MARKET.

the "girl-market." The last was in the spring and fall, when farmers hired their help. Those who were for hire then came to the Old Town on a set date, and stood in two long rows in front of the old tavern in the Square, which remained unchanged, as did the custom no doubt, from the Sixteenth Century. The women bared their arms to the shoulder, and the farmers felt them, approvingly or not as they thought them strong to do their work. There are tricks in all trades. An old country parson from one of the neighboring villages tells that a mistress at whose house hard scrabble ruled would sometimes be found to smear her mouth with bacon to give the impression that there was fat living where she was at home. When a pair were suited, the dickering began, and the bargain made had the sanction of law. Indeed, the applicant's "book" was the first thing asked for if the physical inspection had been satisfactory. In it his or her character was recorded by successive employers, and attested by the police, to whom it had to be presented each time the owner of it made a change of base.

All through the spring great droves of steers came through the town on their way to the Holstein marshlands, where they were to be fattened for the Hamburg and London trade. Ribe was on one of the ancient cattle tracks from the north to the great southern pastures. Then we heard the tread of many hurrying hoofs at early dawn and the loud hop-how! of the herders trying to keep their droves together. While they passed through the town, the people kept discreetly indoors. Indeed, there was no room for them outside; but they bore it patiently, being used to it. Often enough the cows that lived in the town went in by the same door their owners used, and naturally there came to be a neighborly feeling between them, which was extended to these wayfarers. Sometimes, instead of cattle, flocks of Jutland horses came through with braided manes and tails, headed south for the armies of Prussia or France or Austria. Twice a year, I think, they halted at the Old Town, and the market square became the scene of a great cattle fair. It was on one of

these occasions that I made my first bid for a horse. I must have been seven or eight years old, and had with much argument brought my mother over to my notion that a little horse was a good thing to have about the house. It could be stabled in the peat shed, where we kept our winter

WHERE THE COWS GO IN THROUGH THE STREET DOOR.

fuel, and in summer grass enough to more than keep it grew between the cobble-stones in our street, and on the narrow sidewalk. So it was decided that I might buy a horse at the next fair, if I could get it for eight skilling, — about five cents, I should say. That was the appropriation, and with it I sped, my heart beating fast, to the

Square and interviewed a dealer, telling him that I only wanted a little horse, being but a little boy; and besides, the peat shed was small. I had seen some that were just the kind I wanted, running along with a farmer's team sometimes.

The dealer heard me through very gravely, and as gravely inspected the eight skilling which I unwrapped and showed him as a guarantee of good faith. He ran his eye over his sleek mares and regretted that those little horses were scarce that year, and just then he had none in stock. But he was going south, where they were plentiful, he said, and if I would save my money till he came back, he would be sure to bring me one. And I went home joyfully to report my success and get the shed ready, and also to drive off the weeding women, who came most inappropriately that very spring to dig out the dandelions in our gutter. They were to be kept as a choice morsel for my horse. I waited anxiously all through that summer and kept a lookout for every drove of horses that came through, but my trader I never saw again, and in none of the herds

was my little horse. After a while I forgot about it in the great overwhelming sensation of the time. The King came to the town.

In its old age that was an honor it had rarely enjoyed. No one there had, I think, seen the King, unless in the field as a soldier seven years before, in '49–'50. King Frederik, furthermore, was a great favorite of the people. He had given them constitutional government, and he was the popular hero whose army had driven the invaders back after two years of hard fighting. So we turned out to receive him, to the last inhabitant. He came, impressive, kingly, yet with a bonhomie about him that made the common people accept him as their own wherever he went. They told of how he had fared with a steady Jutland farmer who entertained him and his suite on the journey across country. Those yeomen still said "thou" to the King, as their forefathers did in the long ago, and knew little of the ways of courts — cared less, I fancy. Also, they are as close-fisted as they are square in a trade with "known man." A neighbor is safe in their

hands; others may look out for themselves. So when the King went to his host and thanked him for his trouble, calling him by his first name as was his wont, for he understood his men, Hans scratched his head.

"It's all right with the trouble, King," he answered; "but about the expense. That's worse."

The King laughed long and loud and squared up, and they parted friends.

This was the man we turned out in a body to honor. The men who had horses and could ride received him as an escort, miles up the road. All the countryside was there to see and to cheer; most of the men had carried muskets in the war, and to the tune of "Den tappre Landsoldat" they brought him in. The streets were hung with garlands of green, and little girls in white strewed flowers before the royal procession. I remember it all as if it were yesterday. In the evening there was a great time in the Domkirke. The King sat inside the altar-rail in his blue soldier's uniform and with a big silver helmet on.

Years and years after, going through the National Museum at Copenhagen, I saw it hanging there in a glass case, and clear across the room I knew it at sight. That was the way a king ought to look, and it was the way King Christian, his successor, did look when I saw him in the same seat nearly fifty years later. Only he was slender and youthful of figure despite his eighty odd years. King Frederik was stout. Stout or slender, he was our boyish ideal of a king.

There was the gala dinner to which our father and mother went and came home in the small hours of the morning with their pockets full of bonbons, and with wondrous tales of the show that made our ears tingle all that winter. And then there was the discovery on the Castle Hill, made for the occasion expressly. That was the very peak and pinnacle of it all.

Ever since anybody could remember there had been stories about a secret passage leading from the Castle Hill under the moat into town — now, it was said, to the Bishop's Manse, and then again

to the Cloister, or to the Domkirke itself. It was supposed to be a way they had in the old fighting days of getting out and taking the enemy in the rear, when the castle was besieged and they were hard put to it. No one ever knew the truth of it, and so we all believed it; but now by some fortunate chance the secret passage was actually found. The mouth of it had been uncovered, and the King was to see it. It was a tunnel built of the big brick the monks made, and which we still knew as monk-brick. Half the Old Town is built of it, that is to say, castle, cloisters, and churches long since gone live again in the walls of the houses built since the Reformation. What is quite evidently a part of the mantelpiece from the castle adorns the entrance to the silversmith's on the corner of the street through which King Valdemar rode to his dying queen, and the searcher of to-day, seeking vainly a trace of his famous castle where it stood, walks over it, unthinking, when he goes in to buy a souvenir of his visit. This secret way stirred the town mightily. It was confirmation of the

old rumors, and it was in itself a mystery. Where was the other end of the hole?

The King saw, but declined the honor of being the explorer. He suggested first one then another of his suite with less avoirdupois. But they all had excuses. In fact, a small boy might barely have done it; further, the hole led downward and was black and ill-smelling. So it remained unexplored. It stood open for some time, an object of awe and many speculative creeps to us boys; then it was covered up. I regret to have to add, as destroying a long-cherished illusion that had a glamour about it which it is hateful to dispel, that when diggings were made in the Castle Hill last summer, under competent leadership, our secret passage was discovered to be an old sewer that led no farther than the dry moat. It was just as well none of the King's courtiers went down.

Those close-fisted farmer neighbors of ours were sometimes very well-to-do; but a hard fight with a lean soil had taught them the value of money earned, perhaps overmuch. In the Old

Town, as I have said, there were no very rich people, but the poor were not poor either in the sense in which one thinks of poverty in a great city. They had always enough to eat and were comfortably housed. There were no beggars, unless you would count as such the travelling "Burschen," mechanics making the rounds of Denmark and Germany under their guild plan, working where they could and asking alms when they had nothing, the which we freely gave. It was an understood thing that that was not charity in any sense, but a kind of lift to a traveller on his way. So he was getting experience in his work, whatever it might be, by seeing the ways of other communities, and by and by would return to his own, better regarded as man and mechanic for having "travelled" in his years. It was, of course, the old mediæval system of which we saw the last. There is very little left of it to-day, I imagine.

I said that there were no beggars in the Old Town. There are indeed few in Denmark, where prosperity is very evenly distributed. It was,

nevertheless, there I encountered the slyest little beggar it was ever my fortune to come across. It was in one of the cemeteries of Copenhagen, where we had been to look up a friend's grave, that we came upon a little girl, a child of ten, who was fashioning a little mound in the dust and putting a monument over it, a piece of a broken slate. She looked up as we stopped beside her, noticing our serious faces and no doubt checking us off at once as being there on business, not mere chance visitors.

"Here lies my cat," she said. "It was red."

"Oh!" We were interested at once. "And what did it die of?"

"The weasel killed it — sucked its blood."

We walked right into the trap — "And is there to be a writing?"

"Yes," sadly; "'Good-by, little Svip;' but I have no money to buy a slate pencil with."

She accepted our penny with the gravity of an undertaker as she cast a swift glance down the walk where two women in deep mourning were coming. Then she went on making her grave.

There came a season in the autumn when the Old Town resounded with the squealing of countless pigs. It was killing-time when the fat friend so fondly cherished throughout the year was to make return by furnishing forth the tables of his hosts. We boys heard it with joy, for we knew what was to come after all the woe. Toward evening of the great day trenchers of

"Trenchers of steaming sausage."

steaming sausage were carried around among the neighbors who had no pigs, that they also might taste of the good things of the earth. Blood sausage was there, big and round and red, and good to eat, fried with syrup; and liver sausage, pale but appealing; and sausage with rice in and sausage with spices in; and roll sausage, which sometimes I buy in delicatessen shops nowadays; but they must have lost the art of making them, for they don't taste as they did then. The trencher must have been welcome in Mother's larder, for with so many mouths to fill we were taught to look upon meat as a relish rather than the mainstay of the meal. Not that we did not have enough. We always had that, but dishes made of flour, of potatoes, of peas and other vegetables, played a greater rôle in the economic cookery of the day and country than nowadays. And we liked it. I defy any one to find a summer dish that compares with "Rödgröd med Flöde," which was just currant juice and corn-starch with cream. Even the Saturday menu in our house was a favorite: fried herring and Öllebröd.

For special occasions the herring were fried "in dressing-gowns," each in a cornucopia of white paper that gave the dish quite a festive touch. Öllebröd is a dish I despair of making the American mind grasp. It was made of black bread boiled in beer till it made a thick broth, to which each one added cream and sugar to suit his taste. Boiled beer sounds funny, but it was the household beer, non-alcoholic, which was both cheap and good. The other kind we knew as Bavarian beer. Its use was not so common as it has become since.

Still, the Old Town had ever been partial to its beer. When it was in its prime, eight "beer-tasters" were among the town functionaries. They were to see that the supply was up to the standard, with the proper allowance of good hops. In the account of the hanging of the big bell in the church tower—the "storm bell" I spoke of—in 1599, two barrels of beer to the men who hoisted it up and hung it are set down among the expenses. One wonders whether all who took a hand were included. According to one report of that day's

proceedings, there was some doubt about their ability to transport the bell from the foundry to the Domkirke, until the Rector of the Latin School put it up to his boys, who at once took hold and dragged it all the way alone. Whether they came in under the subsequent largesse of beer is not stated, but probably not. Two barrels would not have gone very far then. All this seems queer to us nowadays. It is strange to find that in that century the privileged Town Hall dramshop — the Rathhaus-keller, in fact — achieved a competitor in the Domkirke itself. The chapter of clerics opened one of their own in their cellar under the north end of the chancel, on the plea that they must have wine for churchly functions, of a proper quality, and kept it going for I don't know how long. Much later than that, in 1683, clergymen were forbidden by law to distil whiskey, but in 1768 "priest and deacon" were expressly confirmed in their right to distil it for their own use. So there was ecclesiastical sanction, and to spare, for all the beer and spirits that were consumed. Clear down to my time, when the

Jutland peasant brewed,[1] it was the custom to throw the first three handfuls of malt into the mash "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And the same man who did that, as the next step shut all the doors of the brewing room, placed a glowing coal on each doorstep, put three coals in the vat with a wisp of straw bound in form of a cross, and finally stirred it all with the iron tongs from the fireplace, to keep evil eyes from spoiling the brew![2]

[1] My father's friend, Pastor Fejlberg, who, as a village parson just outside the Old Town, lived the life of the country folk and recorded it with sympathetic understanding, is my authority. I remember him telling a story which only last winter one of his old "boys" recalled to me in California. It was of the village tailor, who, coming home in the small hours of the morning, the worse for many deep potations of the strong mead at the inn, was beset by a ghost that would not let him go. In vain did he try to shake it off at cross-road after cross-road. They all ran like this ×, and had no power over the children of darkness. The spectre still pursued him, shrieking in ghoulish glee over his failure. Not until he came to two roads that crossed at right angles, forming a true ✝, did he beat it off. There it could not pass, and he got home safe; let us hope, sobered also.

[2] Which reminds me of a lesson in manners I once received from the gudewife of a neighboring farm. It was in the days

No wonder there were spooks in the Old Town, the werwolf that haunted the graveyard by night, and the hell-horse on its three legs.

Whenever I think of that last and the horror we held it in, it comes to me that our dread of crawling things must be largely a matter of legs, due to our prejudice in favor of the standard two or four. The hell-horse was ever so much more horrible because of its limping about by night on three. We hate a spider, which has six or eight, and loathe the thousand-leg worm with cause. And at the other end, when it comes to the snake, that has no legs at all, we are prompted by an instant impulse to kill it. It is not a religious prejudice at all, no Garden of Eden notion, but an instinctive recoil from the thing that does not conform to the established standard in legs.

when the farmer and his hands all ate out of the same dish, each with his own horn spoon, which he afterward licked clean and stuck up under the beam until the next meal. I had never been away from home and had "notions" that made me decline a mellemmad (sandwich) when she brought it to me in her honest hand. She took in the situation, and after serving the other children, handed me my mellemmad with the fire-tongs, all sooty from the chimney.

But whether that be so or not, the hell-horse that so terrorized us, was a decadent beast. He was literally on his last legs in my childhood, and even the Old Town knows him no more, I guess.

The man with his head under his arm was, if anything, worse than the hell-horse, and had an unpleasant habit of making himself at home under your roof. The three-legged beast at least stayed outside. There was a headless man in the old mansion at Sönderskov, where I sometimes spent my summer vacation. You could hear him walk in the midnight hour up and down, up and down the hall, and we boys lay and shivered in bed for fear he would come to our door and knock. I have heard him more than once since I grew up and identified his tread on the oaken stairs with the regular beat of the tower-clock above my head, but still I confess to a creepy feeling when I hear it.

But I have gone far afield from the household economics of the Old Town. They were intended to make both ends meet on a scale of small incomes with need, often enough, of the closest

figuring. Large families were the rule rather than the exception. Not till my father was long in his grave and I was looking over his old papers and accounts, did I suspect how bitter was the fight he waged those forty years and to what straits he was put. To turn a coat when the right side was worn threadbare was a common expedient in those days of honest cloth, but Father had his overcoat turned twice to tide him over an evil time. As for us boys, we didn't have any half the time. I remember the winter when, being in such case and making a virtue of bald necessity, I tried to organize a Spartan Society among my schoolmates, the corner-stone of which was contempt of overcoats as plain mollycoddling. As a means of attracting the boys there were secret passwords and an initiation that had to be worked at dusk in the moat by the Castle Hill and was supposed to be very grewsome. It took for a while, until the mothers put a stop to it. I believe one of them who had read Æsop's fable about the fox that had lost its tail and tried to persuade the other foxes that it was the latest

fashion, saw through my dodge. At any rate the long woollen muffler which the society allowed, I being possessed of one, went out of vogue and the overcoats came back. It must have been at that time that my father bought at a salvage sale of the cargo of a wrecked ship a roll of really fine cloth of a peculiar sea-green color. It was a good investment, for it made not only a suit for Father that had lots of wear in it, but all the family were clad in green while it lasted, which was a long while. I hate to think what the boys of to-day would have nicknamed us. They were not so bright then, and I doubt if we would have cared. We boys were quite able to defend the family honor, and quite ready too.

Father had a fancy for numbering his children in Latin. The sixth was called Sextus, the ninth Nonus. In grim jest, he proposed to name the twelfth Duodecimus, but agreed with his fellow-teachers that the luckless child would be forever miscalled "dozen." They had a good laugh over it. Father was very far from being a book-worm. Though he was very learned, he

had a keen sense of humor, and, for all the heavy burdens he carried, he was the life of the company always.

The dead languages were his task in the Latin School, the living his pleasure and recreation. I doubt if there was any modern tongue in which he was not more or less proficient. And so it was natural that when a wrecked ship's crew came to the Old Town he should be the interpreter; or when, as happened every now and then, a bottle was cast ashore on one of the islands with a message from some ship in peril on the deep, that it should be brought to him to be deciphered. There was a fixed fee for this, — a "specie," which was two daler in the case of a bottle, — and it was most welcome. Yet there was always an element of the deeply tragic in it. We children stood with bated breath and looked on while Father unfolded the piece of crumpled paper, polished his spectacles, and read with husky voice some such message as this:

"We are sinking. Jesus, Maria, save us!"

Then the name of the vessel, its home port,

and the latitude, if they knew it. I think I am quoting literally one which I have never forgotten. It was a Portuguese vessel and it got somehow mixed up in my childish imagination with the Lisbon earthquake. That had happened a long while before, but news lasted longer than nowadays. There was not a fresh horror every day, and the illustrated papers kept the earthquake in stock until the siege of Sebastopol came and gave us all a change. That in its turn lasted, I think, quite a dozen years, down to our own war of '64.

I cannot stop without recording here the great and awful tragedy of my childhood. It was when I had become possessed, by some unheard-of streak of luck, of a silver four-skilling that was all my own, to spend as I pleased, with no string to it. It was a grave responsibility, for I perceived that with this immeasurable wealth I might buy practically anything, and what it was to be, with the shops of the Old Town simply crammed with things that were all desirable, was not to be decided lightly. So I betook

myself to the Long Bridge, where I could be alone, to think it over, my pockets, in the depths of which reposed the miraculous coin, filled with

"I THREW THE LAST PEBBLE."

pebbles to punctuate my ideas withal. I stood on one of the arches and threw them in, watching the rings they made in the water, and as they widened till they reached from shore to shore

and I dug deeper and deeper into my pocket, my ambition and my hopes rose with them. Until, all unknowing, I threw the last pebble and, as it sped forth in the sunshine, saw that it was my four-skilling. The waters closed over it with a little splash I can hear yet, and I saw its silver sheen as it turned and sank. I did not weep. The disaster was too great. I stood awhile dumb, then went home and told no one. Darkness had settled upon my life with a sorrow so great that I felt it invested even with a kind of dignity as a vast and irreparable misfortune. I cannot even now laugh at it. It was too terrible to ever quite forget.

CHAPTER VI

King Harald's Stone.

The Old Town was set in a meadow, grass to the right of it, grass to the left of it, stretching away toward the horizon until in the south and east it came up against the black moor, and toward the sunset a little way met the sands of the western sea. What sport was there for boys in such a country? My own boys asked me that question with something of impatience on a walk through the fields, for they had been sizing up the lads of their own age on baseball and found them no good. They threw the ball "just like girls." Not many days after one of them came home with a bruised nose and an increased respect

for Danish muscle. It was good for fighting, anyhow. But, in truth, we did not run to baseball when I was a boy; and as for fighting, we had no more than was good for us; when any Uitlander bragged, for instance. As I look back now it seems to me we didn't have time for either, so busy were we with our sports.

There was the brook that led to the old manse, hidden quite behind a wind-tossed thicket of scrub-oak that had run over the sunken walls since the days when bishops were fighting men who went clad in iron to the wars. Then the manse was one of the strongholds of the Ribe prelates who led the armies of the King against the German counts, notably the "Strong Master Jacob," whose fists and sword saved many a soul where preaching failed. The brook was now barely a step wide, and we boys could easily jump over it in places; but the wild birds built their nests in its banks in spring, and up where we had our early bonfires it widened into a dark still pool, hedged in with mint and forget-me-nots, where

wary trout were always darting from the deep shadows. I go to seek that pool first thing when I return to the Old Town now, and it is not changed. But the boys of to-day seem to have forgotten it.

And then the creek that meandered through the meadows miles and miles from the great peat bog where our winter fuel came from, making one turn more tortuous than another, with hole after hole in the deep pockets that were fairly alive with yellow perch and their silver-scaled neighbors, whatever you would call them. We called them "skaller." I could go to a dozen of them blindfolded, I think, even now, and bait my hook and throw it in the exact spot where a perch is waiting to pull the cork under with one quick, determined jerk. No nibbling about him; his mind is always made up and ready. Sometimes in my dreams I sit by the creek in one particular spot I have never forgotten, with feet hanging over the edge, the slanting sunlight on the dark waters, red-finned perch and silver fish darting hither and thither, and the soft west wind in the grass; and

then I am perfectly happy. Our ambition did not rise to five-pound pickerel in those days. Maybe there weren't any. My little boy and I found plenty in after years, and little else. My pretty fish seemed to be gone. Perhaps the

"In my dreams I sit by the creek."

pickerel had eaten them up, like some mean trust on dry land. If he had, we got square with him. We ate him in turn. They had reduced the catching of him to an exact science. Drop your bait there, right in the edge of the rushes, so — a swirl and a sudden tightening of the line! Let him run, and take out your watch. Eight minutes to a dot, and he is off again. That is when he turns the bait around in his mouth and swallows it, having lain by waiting for signs of treachery. Now, pull him in. Here he is! Hi, what a big fellow!

Where I shot my First Duck.

It was up here by this turn that I shot my first duck. It was in the winter vacation, and I had found out that here, where there was a stretch of open water, a flock of black-headed ducks were at home. I burrowed through six feet of snow to the water's edge and shot one of them as they flew. It fell and dived, and I threw my clothes in the snow and jumped after. Ugh! it was cold. I dodged the floating ice as well as I could and kept turning the cakes over and over, looking for my duck, but it was not there. It was not till I climbed ashore again and dressed myself with chattering teeth that, happening to look under the bank where the current had cut the earth away, I saw it sitting composedly on the little shelving beach below. I can feel now the throbbing of my heart as I leaned over, and reaching down with infinite stealth, caught it by the neck and yanked it up. The pride of that homeward procession with the head of the duck flapping from my game-bag! And then, after all, the cook had to wring its neck. In my joy I had forgotten to kill it. The shot had only stunned it.

If fish ran low in our own river because of the swans taking more than their share, we could go to Konge-aaen (the King's River), four or five miles away, where there were jumping fish which an Englishman came across the North Sea every year to catch with flies. This to us was a very amazing thing, and quite like an Englishman: to angle with a bit of hen feather, or even a grasshopper, when there were fine fat worms to be had for the digging. Really, if the truth be told, it was a rank imposition on the fish. I confess that it seems to me so even yet — not exactly a square deal. The Englishman did not discourage this attitude on our part. He went right on, and for years had a monopoly of the salmon in the stream. For we did them little damage. Once in a while very large salmon were speared by those living along the stream. More frequently a farmer haying in his field spitted a sturgeon on his pitchfork. Then there was a fight, the accounts of which we boys listened to with breathless interest when the fish was brought to town. Always it seemed to me to hark back to the days we so loved

to dream of; for the sturgeon was all clad in mail, as it were, just like the knights of old, and it was often a question whether the fish would come ashore or the man go into the brook. At least that was the way he told it. If the fish said nothing, it looked grim enough to make you believe almost anything.

But if one did not run to fishing, — though what healthy boy does not? — there was the heath, and then the forest. Forest sounds big. All there was of it was a patch of woodland some twenty or twenty-five acres in extent, but to us in the mellow autumn days it was an enchanted forest indeed. For under the gnarled oaks, only survivors of the sturdy giants that had once covered the land, as the names of half the villages bore witness, and had filled the seas with the bold vikings' ships, was a wilderness of hazel bushes that was the special preserve of the Latin School boys on Saturday afternoons, or when we had "month's leave." Month's leave was an afternoon off, which the school might choose itself once a month, if it had been good. Then a com-

mittee of the oldest boys went to the Rector with the observation that it was a fine day for play, while the rest of us stood with beating hearts, and if the gout did not pinch him just then, he would say, "Yes! be off," and with a mighty shout we would run for our botany boxes and crooked sticks, and for the woods, if it was in autumn. The boxes were to hold the nuts; the crooked sticks served a double purpose. They were for walking-staffs on the homeward way, for the forest was three miles away; once there, they were indispensable to hook down the branches with. The hazel bushes grew in the twilight of the woods, much as dogwood grows with us, and were mostly big enough to climb, but the nuts were on the farthest twigs, that could only be reached and stripped by pulling them down. That was fine fun, with enough tumbles to make it exciting, and a very substantial reward if judgment were used in the picking. The supply so laid in often lasted past Christmas, and we had little else. Walnuts were too dear. Chestnuts we did not know at all, not the eatable kind.

The other, the horse-chestnut, made fine ammunition when, in autumn, we played "robber and soldier." The winter storms that drove in wreckage from the Gulf Stream strewed our coast, indeed, with Brazil-nuts, sometimes whole ship loads of them, but they were good only for making bonfires. The sea or something else had cracked them. There was not a kernel in one of them.

It does not seem to me that life could be worth much in the Latin School without those nutting expeditions. And so, when I went there with my own boys, and after wading through the old bog where the stork stalked up and down fishing for frogs, we came to the cool shade of the forest and found it hedged in with cheeky American barbed wire and signs up warning intruders off, my spirit rose in instant rebellion. This was a double disgrace not to be borne. And once back again in the land of freedom I planned to defeat that wretched barbed-wire fence. Not only must it go, but the forest itself must belong to the Latin School, or else the undisputed right to

go nutting there forever; and while I had it in mind I thought I saw a way to drive in the edge of democracy by vesting the control of it in the boys, with the proviso that at least once a year they should invite the public school boys to be their guests there. In my day they fought at the drop of a hat; the recollection of the bitter feud between them stirs my blood even now when I think of it. But alas for the best-laid plans of mice and men! I was told, when I moved to the attack, that times had changed; that school was dismissed at two o'clock, not at five, nowadays, and that therefore month's leave as we knew it had gone out of existence; that Latin School and "plebs" were part of the same system, hence the strife of the old times had ceased; and that anyhow boys rode cycles and made century runs and such things, where we went nutting. Truly, the times do change. I am glad I was a boy then, if I am a back number now.

Maybe they ride right through the heath on their senseless runs, and don't stop to pick Rävlinger. If they do, I am done; I have nothing

more to say. Rävlinger are the little black berries that grow on the creeping heather in the sterile moor, quite like our blueberries, only there are

Picking Rävlinger in the Moor.

many more of them. Very likely you would think them sour; we thought them heavenly, and there is enough of the boy left in me to back up that opinion to-day against the riper judgment of the years. We gathered them by the bucketful, paying little heed to the heath farmer's warning not to touch them after midsummer night, for then the devil had greased his boots with them, and came home with black faces and hands and terrible tales of the "worms" — *i.e.* snakes —

we had encountered in the heath. And, indeed, there are enough of these poisonous reptiles there yet. But, now as then, a fellow can keep out of their way. Some of the dearest recollections of my boyhood are of the long tours I made through this lonesome moor, where a rare shepherd knitting his woollen stocking and a gypsy's cart are often the only "humans" one meets in a day's journey. Met, I should have said, perhaps, for in another generation even the moor will be a thing of the past. Already half of the six hundred thousand acres of heath land in the Danish peninsula has been planted with seedling pine, American pine, that has grown up finely, and a great and salutary change has been wrought, no doubt. But if there is to be a day without moor, without heather, without the sweet honey the bees gathered there when the broom was purple, and without Rävlinger, I — well, I am glad I was a boy when I was.

Which brings to my mind an adventure of one of my lonely trips in the heath. This one went far, extending over a whole vacation week. I

had come at the end of a long summer day to an inn, where they gave me a big box-bed to sleep in; and I had barely got into it when a lot of scratching under me made me aware that a family of rats shared my couch. But I was too sleepy to care; we snuggled up together and did one another no harm in the night. I remember it because of the terror it caused my mother when she heard of it. She had a great dread of rats. It was on that same trip that, coming to the shore, I supped at a fisherman's hut on smoked dogfish and thought it the finest I had ever tasted. I was a boy and hungry. But I do not know why it should not be good. The dogfish I am thinking of are the small sharks that infest the North Sea coast in great numbers. They ate the flesh and sold the skin for sandpaper in those days. It was scratchy and did very well for that purpose.

The Seem woods, where we went nutting, covered, as I said, but a little patch, but a dozen miles to the eastward there were real forests, in which a boy might get lost; and there were deer in them, which

made a picnic there ever so exciting. That had to be engineered by the grown-ups, for it meant impressing practically the entire rolling stock of the town for the day. Then its half-dozen ancient Holsteiners, yellow-wheeled open wagons with seats for eight or a dozen, pulled up early in the Square, where all upper-tendom was waiting with much provender to board them for Gram. Many were the dubious headshakes of those who were left behind as to the promises of the weather. The wind was in the east, and the clouds prophesied rain. They did that regularly, and they kept their promise at least half the time. It was sometimes a bedraggled crowd that made cover at sunset. But if even half the day was fair, it paid well for the trip. The change from the barren, rather stern outlook from the Old Town, where the sea-wind stunted tree and thicket so that it always sloped down to nothing in the west as if some giant scythe had trimmed it so, to the beech woods with their shelter and quiet and their luxury of color and vegetation, was very alluring. While our elders took tea at

the forester's, where the tea-urn was always simmering, expecting company, and duly admired the furniture in the Countess's drawing-room at the Château, we boys organized a mighty hunt for boar and bear, and sometimes were lucky enough to start a roebuck. Then, indeed, was the hunt a success, and our minds were stocked for many a day to come with stuff for day-dreams.

There was enough of that lying all about, for field and heath were dotted with the cairns that covered the ashes of the bold vikings. Off to the northeast from Gram, buried in a thicket of scrub-oak where once had been deep forest, lay a large boulder, twice as high as a big man, that always seemed to me to span the thousand years between the old days and ours as no dry books could. Stones are not common in that country; this one had come down from Norwegian mountains on an ice-floe in ages long past. But no geological speculation chained our imagination to it. It had a story of its own. Harald Blaatand, grandfather of Knud (Canute) the Great, had

chosen it to put over the grave of his mother, Queen Thyra, and was hauling it across the country with an army of oxen and thralls, when word came that his son had risen against him to take the kingdom. He dropped it there to take up arms, and there it had been since. The top of it was split open. The priest in a neighboring parish had tried, a hundred years before, to quarry it for his parsonage, but like King Harald was halted before he had gone far. What was the matter with the parsons in those days, I cannot imagine. When they opened the graves of King Valdemar and Queen Dagmar, of whom I have told elsewhere, they found her tomb a jumble of broken brick and rubbish. A priest attached to the church, to make a nice roomy burial-place for himself, had calmly cut into the resting-place of Denmark's best-beloved queen, throwing the bones he found there to the scrap-heap. A hundred years and over, the skull of the gentle Dagmar, which some one had picked up, lay about the church and was then carried off by a thief. A gold cross the queen had worn was saved, having

"value" in the eyes of the vandals, and in the course of time found its way into the possession

DAGMAR'S DESPOILED TOMB.

of the government and into the museum of antiquities, where it now is, its most precious relic.

"Holme week" was the great time of the year for us all. It came late in July, when the hay was all in and we got our fishing-tackle out; for the hay was the great crop thereabouts, and until it had been cut it was not a good thing to be caught by the farmer wading through his meadows.

Out toward the sea the river made a great bend, and in it, near its mouth, lay a stretch of marsh-land where the grass grew exceeding rich and sweet. This was the "Holme,"[1] which in the thirteenth century had been given to the town by the King in return for its building a wall around Ribe the better to defend it. The wall was never built, though they got so far as digging a ditch, but they kept the land, and after the Reformation divided it up among themselves, to their great gain. When now the last of the hay had been cut and stacked, the Old Town went a-picnicing, bag and baggage. Those who could afford it drove out; those who couldn't walked, or sailed, or rowed out, depending on a lift from the tide to help them back. And all of them had hampers or baskets, filled to the brim. There is no occasion that I know of in Denmark when these are left behind. There, on the meadow that was like a smooth, green-carpeted floor, they sported and ran and tumbled, pelting one another with hay, children and grown-ups together, all day. I never

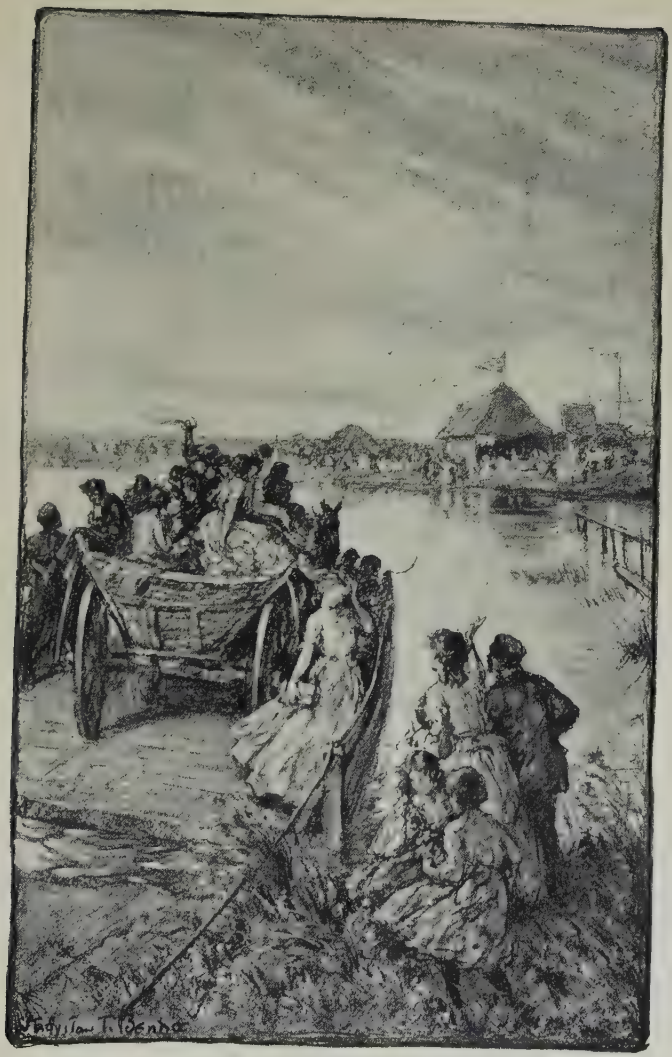
[1] Meaning islands.

knew who paid for the hay, or if it was just a contribution to the general good-will of the time, but no one ever put a damper on our fun. The climax of it for us boys was always the attack on the Fold, a kind of fort on the meadow into which the cattle were driven in case of flood. The Fold had earth walls and a living hedge, and to roll off that wall with a bloody nose, or better still, to climb over it and give the other fellow one, was enough to make any boy feel like a real hero, especially with the girls looking on and showing great concern.

When the sun set over the meadows and we came back from our campaign, tired and sore, supper was spread on the grass beside a comfortable hay-stack, and it was good. There is nothing anywhere half so good to eat when you are hungry as the Danish Smörrebröd, particularly the kind they make in Ribe. Only, I guess, you've got to have a boy's stomach, for you will want to eat it all, and the last time I did — well, never mind! I will lay that up against my American training. It never happened when I was a boy but once; that was when a ship had been wrecked

with a cargo of Messina raisins, and the man who had bought it saw us snooping around where he had laid those raisins out to dry on great tarpaulins and told us we might eat as many as we liked. We did, and ouch! let me forget it. I sure thought I was going to die.

In the gloaming they lit tallow candles set in beer bottles in the dancing tent, and to the tune of an old cracked fiddle everybody had a turn on the sod with everybody else. If there were classes and distinctions in the Old Town, there were none out there. The Bishop's wife or the Rector's daughter danced with the shoemaker's lad and had a good time. The old ferry raft that was pulled from shore to shore with a rope, plied back and forth over the river, carrying great loads of hay one way, and bigger and bigger loads of merry-makers from the town, for those were the midsummer nights when nobody kept account of time. That was the Old Town's real holiday. It came to an end with the third Sunday, I think it was, in July, after which the cattle were turned in to graze on the Holme and the herdsman was



In Holme Week—The Old Ferry Raft.

left in sole possession; by no means a sinecure, for soon the North Sea gave warning that at any moment his life and the safety of his charges might be at stake, if they were outstripped in the race with the angry floods.

But while the sea yet slumbered in summer sunshine we boys had our shore days, and they were fine. Then we arose with the sun and walked the four miles to the beach, which thereabouts is very flat and wide. When the tide is out, there is a stretch of quite half a mile of white sand to deep water. Over this the flood-tide comes stealing in so stealthily, yet so swiftly, that it takes a pretty good runner to get to the land without very wet feet or worse, if he is caught far out by the turn of the tide. We would sometimes bring home quite a store of amber from these trips, and then little files would be busy for days making hearts, sabots, and other trinkets for the girl each boy liked best. Hearts were the most popular and also the easiest to fashion. We made those things ourselves, and it was a sort of manual training not to be despised.

"Treading" flounders was a unique kind of fishing that took a whole day from earliest dawn, but sometimes turned up a bigger yield of fish than one could carry home. A perfectly calm day was needed for that, when there was no "wash." The boys followed the outgoing tide, tramping hard with bare feet in the soft sand and steering by the church on the island out in the sea. When they had gone as far as they wanted, they tramped back by another route, and then put in the long wait till the tide had come in and was ebbing again, building fires, catching crabs, or whatever they felt like. With the next ebb-tide came their harvest. Following their tracks of the morning, they would find, wherever they had made them deep enough, a little pool left by the receding waters, and in each pool one or two, and sometimes three, flounders about the size of my hand, very much like the Catalina sand dabs of the Pacific. These they would unceremoniously heave into a sack they carried between them, and before long it grew heavy with their catch. It seems that the bottom of the North Sea is fairly covered with

multitudes of these fish, which served the islanders of that coast as both meat and bread. They dried and toasted them, and served them with their afternoon coffee, and you might look long for a better dish. I think of it often as being quite like Tvebak [1] slightly salted, only better to my youthful taste.

Out along the river mouth was famous hunting for water-fowl. In the migrating season great flocks of duck alighted there, and geese and every other kind of game that flies. I can hear yet the cry of the sickle-billed curlew in those meadows. It prophesied rain, we said, and the promise was usually kept. When I was a big boy, the first telegraph line was built to the Old Town, and that autumn an odd thing happened. Morning after morning dozens of shore-birds were found dead under the wires. We thought first that the electric current had slain them as they roosted on the wires; but as it was apparent that some of them couldn't roost that way, a better explanation was sought and found. They had been killed

[1] Tvebak is Danish for Zwieback.

flying against the wires. It seems that they were strung just at the height at which they flew. It is clear to me that birds have some power of reasoning, for after a while we found no more dead. Evidently they had learned to fly higher, or lower perhaps.

Once or twice in autumn, on their way south, great flights of kramsfowl, a bird highly esteemed by the cook, roosted in the Plantage, a little grove just outside of town. Just when that would be, no one could tell, but for weeks after the leaves began to turn some of us set our snares, —a willow bough bent in a triangle, with horsehair loops in each of the uprights, and baited with rowan-berries below. The bird would sit and swing in the triangle, and, bending to get at the berries under its feet, would put its head through one or both of the loops and be strangled. Morning after morning we would sneak out before breakfast to look to our snares and come home empty-handed. Then some brisk morning, when the first touch of frost was in the air, we would drag such loads of the big black birds into

town that there would be talk of it for days. Every sick person we knew had a feast, and we felt that we were mighty hunters indeed.

Cruising up to the Seem Church.

So there was no lack of sport in the Old Town, and I haven't begun to tell you of it all. In the winter there was the river that was then dammed back and became a great frozen lake five or six miles long. Then we would strap on

our skates good and tight for a long trip, and go cruising up from the Kannegrove,[1] the big ditch down by the Cloister, to the Seem church, clear at the further end, and, spreading our jackets out, let the wind use them as sails on the run back. I tell you we came down in a hurry. No time for fancy skating then. But a mighty sharp lookout had to be kept on that trip, for if a skate slid into a crack there was a wrench and a fall, and it was apt to be a bad one. When the snow lay deep, there was such coasting as you do not often find. For though the country was flat as a pancake, the Castle Hill was there with its deep moat. Almost clear up on the other side the rush would fetch you. I haven't seen a better coasting hill in New England. But, on the other hand, I must own that American boys are "up" on steering to an extent we didn't dream of. The "leg out" is a Yankee invention, and it is great. We just slid.

[1] The "cleric's" or "clerk's ditch" that skirted the monks' garden in the old days. The garden is still there, and traces of the ditch.

CHAPTER VII

RIBERHUS.

To the west of the Old Town, with only the dry moat and a fringe of gardens between, stood the green Castle Hill. Green it was and had been in the memory of the oldest. The road-makers of three generations before had taken what the house-builder had left of the ruins that alone remained of Denmark's once great historic stronghold. There its fighting kings guarded the land against the enemy to the south; thence its armies had marched to victory or defeat in many a fight with the turbulent German barons. Thither came the merchant ships of Europe bringing stone from the Rhine for the Domkirke, sweet wines and

silken raiment for the ladies of the court, and cloth from Flanders; for to be well dressed in those days a man's coat must have been cut in Ribe. The river was long since sanded in, in my day, and ships came that way no more. A few lonesome sheep were picketed on the green hill, and when at night the white mist crept in from the sea, blurring and blotting the landscape out, their melancholy bleating alone betrayed the site where once the clash of arms waked ready echoes.

Here dwelt King Valdemar and his gentle queen who live in the Danish folk-song. Of her after seven centuries the ploughman sang yet:

> She came without burden, she came with peace,
> She came the good peasant to cheer.

The ballad tells of the brief year of bliss the royal lovers lived here, of his wild ride across the heath to her death-bed, and of the daring May party that won back the castle from a traitorous garrison for "King Erik the young." Last summer they dug in the Castle Hill and found little enough there. But here on my table stands a brick from the stout wall, that long since crossed the ocean with

me. It may be that there is magic in the stone to tell of the past, for it was fashioned by monks who knew more than the pater-nosters they told on their beads; or is it that I am of Queen Dagmar's kin, her god-son, christened as I was in the font she gave to the Domkirke: last night as I sat alone pondering the old songs, the flickering shadows from my study fire touched it, and I dreamed again the story of King Valdemar and Riberhus.[1]

I dreamed that I saw a great throng on land and shore, men and women in holiday garments, straining their eyes seaward, where a ship with golden dragon's head was making its way slowly between low islands. As it came into full view, the people broke into jubilant cheers: "Welcome Dagmar, Denmark's Queen!" It was the King's ship bringing his bride from her far Bohemian home. Answering cries came back from the crew, and with music and the waving of many banners the splendid vessel sailed up the channel. At the rail stood a golden-haired princess with the King's messenger and friend.

[1] The Ribe House, or Ribe Castle.

Her eyes were wet, but there was a happy smile upon her lips. Her glance sought the lonely figure of a horseman on the beach whose prancing steed champed its bit impatiently. Where he rode the crowd fell back and made room.

"What knight rides yonder on the white charger?" she asked; "never saw I kinglier man."

"Hail thee, fair Queen! that first of Denmark's sons thou sawest is thy royal bridegroom," was the answer. "It is King Valdemar, whom his people call 'Victor,' with cause."

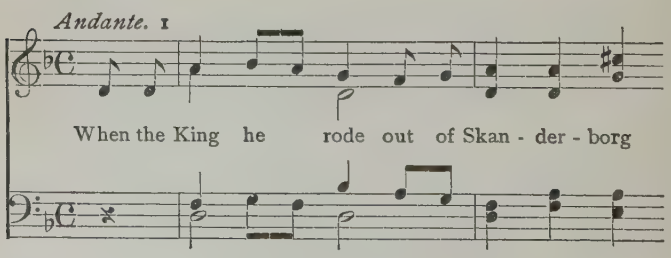
Then I heard a louder, more joyous cry than before, and I saw the people thronging about, striving to kiss the hem of her robe as she stood upon the quay that was laid with crimson cloth for her feet. I saw the King bend his knee and kiss her hand and her brow; and the people went wild at the sight. They took her horses out of their harness, and themselves drew the chaise toward the city with the many spires, singing and shouting their joy; and I saw that she was glad and that the young King who rode by her

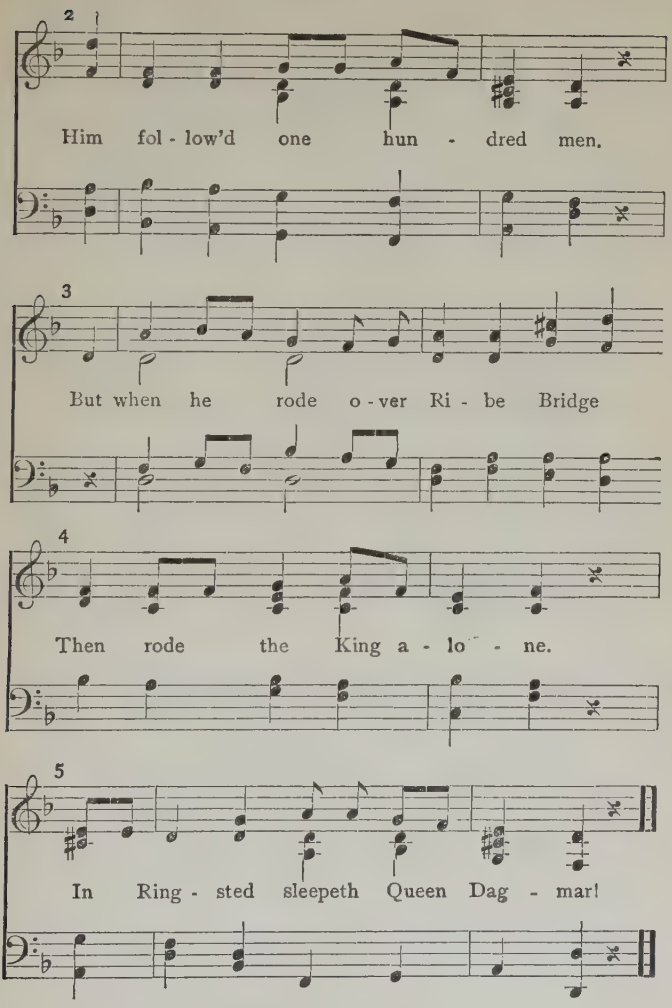
side was proud and happy. I saw them walk up the broad aisle of the Domkirke together, followed by many brave knights and fair ladies, and before the altar they knelt and were blest by the venerable priest who had held the King in his arms at his christening. The bells of the thirteen churches and chapels in the town were rung, and masses were said for the twain at their altars. And I heard many a wassail drunk at the wedding-feast in the great halls of the castle and in the thronged streets of the town, where torches burned from sundown to sunrise and the people made merry through the long summer nights. Strong ale and mead from the royal cellars ran like a river, for such was the custom of the times and of the people.

But before the sun had set twice I heard a new song in the Ribe streets which the very children learned with joy. It told of the Queen's "morning-gift" from her lord. "Ask," he said; "whatever thy wish, of land or gold, it shall be thine." But she prayed for neither greatness nor riches, but that the plough-tax that bore heavily on the

husbandman be forgiven him, and that the peasants who, for rising against it, were laid in irons be set free. And the King granted her prayer. Ever since, the Danish people have given Dagmar's name to their best-beloved queens. "Daybreak" was the meaning of it in the old tongue, and she was their hope and heart's desire.

Then darkness fell; and I saw the King resting after the chase in a far-distant place. In the west there arose a cloud of dust, and at the sight of it his heart misgave him, for his happiness had been too great for man. Out of it came one riding fast with evil tidings: "The Queen is sick unto death. She bids the King make haste." And there came to me the voices of women singing at their spinning-wheels as I heard them when I was a child; and this was the burden of their song:




2
Him fol - low'd one hun - dred men.
3
But when he rode o - ver Ri - be Bridge
4
Then rode the King a - lo - ne.
5
In Ring - sted sleepeth Queen Dag - mar!

Over the wildsome moor he had come, neither resting nor sleeping, his face set ever toward the sea, the one wild prayer in his heart that he might not be too late. But ride man ever so fast, death travels faster. As his horse's hoofs struck fire from the stones in Grönnegade,[1] with the castle beyond the pillared gate at its end, the Ribe

The King's Ride over the Moor.

church bells rang out the tidings of Dagmar's death.

Now help, O Lord, my Dagmar dear,
Me thinketh my heart must break.

On his knees at her bed the King begs her weeping women to pray that she may speak to him once more, and the Queen opens her eyes and

[1] Green Street, the street leading to the Green where the castle stood.

smiles upon her lover. "Fear not for me," she says, "I did no worse sin than to lace my silken sleeves on Sunday." And her last thought as her first is for her people. She prays him to pardon every outlaw, and with her dying breath pleads with him not to take Bengerd to his heart. "The evil Bengerd," the ballad calls her, and evil did she bring to Denmark. For, when in after years the King did marry the Portuguese princess, whose beauty was so great that even her dust after ages bore witness to it, she brought King and land but sorrow and misery, aye! and of both a full measure.[1]

[1] Of her three sons, Abel slew his brother Erik for the crown, and was himself slain by a peasant in the highway. His body was buried in a swamp, with a stake driven through the heart to lay his grievous ghost. Christopher, who took the sceptre last, was poisoned by a monk in the sacrament as he knelt at the altar rail in the Domkirke; and in the division of the kingdom between the brothers that gave cause for their quarrels, began Denmark's woes, which in our own day culminated in her dismemberment, when Germany took Slesvig, Abel's dukedom. Queen Bengerd herself was the worst-hated woman in Danish history, as Dagmar is yet the best-beloved. In death the people's hatred would not let her rest. When her grave was opened in my boyhood, it was

But these things were not yet. Still I dreamed by my study lamp. I saw a mighty host of men and ships; fifteen hundred sail did I count in line. But the men wore no fine raiment; they were clad in steel and carried battle-axes and swords. Every knight wore on his left shoulder a crusader's cross. And I saw the King, grown stern and gray, lead them toward a foreign shore, where there dwelt men who worshipped idols. And there by night the pagan hosts fell upon them in such multitudes that the King's men were swallowed up as sands by the sea. I saw them struggling in darkness and dread in which no man knew friend from foe, and the Christians were driven back in despair, their standards taken; and a great cry arose that all was lost.

Then I beheld a wondrous thing. I saw a strange banner descending as if from the clouds, over against the hills upon which the priests were

found that the stone slab which covered it had been pried off and a round boulder dropped in the place made for her head. Yet her beautiful black braid was there, and the skull, so delicate in its perfect oval, that those who saw it marvelled greatly.

"For God and the King."

calling upon God for victory. It was crimson red, and in it was a great white cross, even the one upon which our Lord was crucified for the sins of the whole world. And a loud voice cried, "Bear this high, and victory shall be yours." And the heathen saw and heard and were stricken with fear; for now they knew, indeed, that they were fighting the Lord God of Hosts, and that their strength was as a broken reed. And as the ensign fell among the battling hordes I saw a tall knight who rode before the King seize it and, holding it high, spur his horse into the bravest of the fight, with the cry "For God and the King."

And I saw the King's men take heart and the heathen turn and flee from the shore that was strewn with their slain, while the sea ran red with blood. And the King and his men rested their swords and knelt upon the battlefield as the moon rose over it, and sang a Te Deum to their God for having delivered them and crushed the power of the Evil One; for of the Fiend and of his idols there was an end in the land, then and forevermore. And I knew that I had seen in my

dream the battle of Lyndanissa that won all Esthland for the Christians' God by King Valdemar's sword, and gave to Denmark its Dannebrog, oldest of flags among nations.

Once more did darkness fall, and I saw the old King betrayed by night in his tent, in the midst of peace, by his guest, the Black Count Henrik of Schwerin, who hated him, and, with Dagmar's son, brought, bound and gagged, "in great haste and fear," to the traitor's strong tower on the Elbe. I saw them lying in chains, thirty moons and more in the dark dungeons, while Denmark's foes rose on every side and overwhelmed its armies that had lost hope with their leader. I saw the old marshal, the King's kinsman and friend, brought wounded and chained to his cell after the battle; and the aged King bowed his head while his enemies mocked him. And I saw the prince with Dagmar's blue eyes and fair locks comfort him in his sorrow and defeat. And then I saw the Danish women, matron and maid, in the proud castle and in the peasant's hut, bring their gold and their gems, their rings and their

"THE KING AND HIS MEN KNELT UPON THE BATTLEFIELD."

Danish Women ransomed their King.

jewels and their silver, for their King's ransom; and once more the Old Town echoed with cries of gladness and joy as when Dagmar came; but this time he rode alone, and stricken and sore.

"Comforted the King in sorrow and defeat."

Once again in my dreams I saw the gates of the tower swing wide and a mighty army march forth to meet the German traitors in battle, to avenge their King. And I saw the great barren where the bones of the fairest knights in all the

North lay bleaching in many a summer's sun from that day, while all the Danish land mourned. I saw the day all but won when the base Holsteiners turned their arms against their Danish allies, and I beheld the sun set in defeat and disaster and the King borne, wounded and beaten, from the field, his army destroyed, his wars ended.

But still were his people faithful, in evil days as in good. I saw King Valdemar, now blinded and white and bent, put away the sword and write laws for his land that in the evening of his life earned him the name of the Wise Law-giver; for the landmarks he set, the justice he did between man and man, endure unto this day. I saw the last crushing sorrow fall upon him when Dagmar's son was killed on the chase by a friend's arrow. And I saw the mightiest of Danish rulers breathe out his great soul in the fulness of his days. And as I awoke I heard the voice of the old chronicler, when Valdemar was gathered to his fathers: "Truly then fell the crown from the heads of Danish men." For never since has Denmark seen his like.

The embers in my fireplace glowed and the stone from the old tower showed red. Once more I saw, as in a dream, the castle on the hill. It was night, and there were lights in the windows and sounds of noisy revelry within. On the green by the river men and women were dancing. The girls had daisies and the young leaf of the beech braided in their hair, for it was May-day. The men wore long muffling cloaks that hid their armor and their swords. They were dancing "May into town" in the glad fashion of the day, and into the castle too, where the captain was making merry with his men. He had betrayed the King's cause into the hands of his enemies and sold his soul, with his faith, for their gold. Little did he dream who was dancing over the drawbridge which the sentinels let down at his bidding:

> They danced them over the Ribe Bro, (bridge)
> There danceth the knight with pointed shoe
> For Erik, for young King Erik.

Over the bridge and into the castle they danced, and into the great hall where the faithless Tage

Muus and his men sat drinking deep to the success of their deviltry, hammering a mirthful welcome on the table with their tankards as the doors swung open for the May party. They trod the dance lightly before them, the men waving torches and the women weaving flowery garlands about them, and the knaves hailed them uproariously; but the shout died in their throats as, at a signal from their leader, the women seized the torches and the men dropped their cloaks and fell upon the revellers with drawn swords. For they were the King's men, and Ribe was loyal if the captain of the castle was false. So it was won by a May dance

For Erik, for young King Erik,

Valdemar's son, and his banner flew once more from its walls, while the dungeon claimed the traitors.

Thus I dreamed. And I thought that I slept seven centuries and saw the green Castle Hill once more with its lonesome sheep looking into the sunset; with its billowing reeds in the deep moats that whisper to the west wind of the great

days that were; with the sleepy little town by the shallow river, its glory gone, its ships gone, the world gone from it, forgotten even as — no, not that. For the great name, the great past, live for all time, and that which I have written is not a dream. It is the story of the castle that stood upon the green hill, and of its king. It is the story of Riberhus.

CHAPTER VIII

JACKDAWS IN COUNCIL.

THE big pear tree that hung over our way to school is gone, but the hawthorn hedge remains. When our young feet trod those toppy pavements, the tree smoothed the thorny path to learning in a way all its own. The late summer season when the sun shone so temptingly on the round red pears, and the old woman over whose garden wall they grew counted her profits at a skilling for two, fell in with our time for practising markmanship, just as the spring brought its marbles and September its nutting tramps.

Then if it befell that a good shot and the law of gravitation operated simultaneously to dislodge the biggest and juiciest pear, and it dropped in our path — surely destiny was to blame, not we. Findings is keepings, and there is no law against picking up a pear in the street. The stork on the Rector's house looked on unmoved. Being in a way responsible for us, perhaps he was resigned to the ways of boys. Not so the old woman who counted upon our skillings. She stormed in the doorway, much exercised in spirit, and threatened to report us. I think she did once or twice, for we were warned not to go under the tree when pears were falling. But there was no other way out. And we detected, or thought we did, a twinkle in the old Rector's eye while he took us to task. He had been a boy himself; was yet, despite the infirmities of years, beneath his mask of official sternness. And we evened it up with the pear woman by loyally investing our pennies with her when we had them.

The Latin School had always been just across

from the Domkirke with which it had come into existence, and in the old house I was born, the teachers having lodgings under its roof at that time. But it was moved as the tie between church and school was loosened, and it was thus that the feud was bred with the pear woman, who had until then dwelt in seclusion and peace. That we came honestly by our proficiency in marksmanship I gather from the fact that, when the ecclesiastical bond was stronger a good deal than in our day, it made its mark in the pages of the Old Town's history by picking the very Domkirke itself for a target. It is on record that the churchwarden complained of the boys snow-balling its windows. Of several hundred window-panes in the west front only seven were then whole; but, he added, "it is no use sending for the glazier to put them in while the snow is on the ground, for they will as surely be smashed again." Evidently union of pedagogue and priest had not bred reverence in their pupils. They were the vandals who, when the Reformation had consigned to the lumber room the fine old crucifix that hangs once more in

its rightful place since the late restoration, amused themselves by trimming the nails of the image. But that time they got their deserving, if the rod had been spared by man too long. According to tradition they lost their own finger nails, and it served them right, too. They were sad old days, when to put reverence and common sense, with common decency, in the rag-bag was held to be a mark of piety. Clear down into our day we heard the echo of it. When, in the '40's, the Domkirke was undergoing repairs, the stone coffin of one of the old kings was carried off, and after a long search was discovered serving as a horse-trough in front of a public house. "To what base uses —!" It would not have been recovered at that, but for peremptory notice from the government that it had better turn up without delay. There is nothing in their past record to forbid the suspicion that the Latin schoolboys had had a hand in raping the royal tomb.

So, if it does not fall to the lot of every man to have an alma mater dating back to the time of

the crusades (the school was founded in 1137, or very soon after), the fact of having it is not necessarily a warrant of saintliness. It was not with us. I have recounted some of our pranks. For them, if they went beyond the limit, there was still the rod. That and the big book with red letters and the iron chain riveted to it that lay in the school library were the visible survivals of a past day. Concerning the latter there was a belief current among the untaught that it was in fact Cyprianus, the book with which the priest could cast a spell and bid the devil come and go as he saw fit, but which the hand of no unlearned man might touch without instant peril to life and soul. It was, as a matter of fact, the Bible that was held in such regard. The chain that gave it its grewsome aspect was testimony merely to its rarity and the cost of paper and printer's ink in the day that made so sure it would not get lost. All of which made little or no impact upon the belief that the devil was firmly chained between its pages, and that it was a good plan to give it a wide berth.

No mediæval superstition was needed to convince us of the wisdom of that plan when it came to the rod. Its ceremonial use, so to speak, had fallen into disuse. I mean by that the great capital occasions when, for hopeless breach of discipline or for disgracing the school before the world, a pupil was flogged by the janitor in the presence of the assembled school, after a lecture by the Rector, and publicly expelled. No such emergency arose in my day. But in a more private and sufficiently intimate way it was still part of the curriculum. The daily cudgelling of dull heads was supposed to have a stimulating effect upon the intellect. It was the custom of the day, but its sun was setting even then. Is it merely harking back to personal experience that I sometimes think a boy is just pining for a whipping and won't be happy till he gets it; and that, having got it, he feels justified, squared as it were, and ready for a new and better start? Or, is it faith in the boy's fundamental love of fair play that sizes up the offence and its deserving? I will let the teacher decide. Somewhere I have

told of my first introduction to the "kids' school," kept by an old "she-wolf," and its educational equipment. I was dragged all the way to it by an exasperated house-maid, hammering the pavement with my heels and yelling at the top of my voice. Forbearance at home had, it seems, ceased to be a virtue. There was none in the ogre who received me at the door and forthwith thrust me into a barrel down in the cellar, where it was dark, and putting on the lid, snarled through the bung-hole that that was the way bad boys were dealt with in school. Good boys were given kringler to eat. When from sheer fright I ceased howling, I was set free and conducted to the yard, where there was a sow with a litter of pigs. The sow had a slit in the ear to which my attention was invited. It was for being lazy, and when boys were lazy — the ogre brandished the long shears that hung at her belt — zip! I earned a kringle that very afternoon.

The ways of the Latin School were still stamped with the old severity, but there was some approach to present-day methods of constitutional

government. The faculty took hardened cases under advisement. Execution of judgment was vested in the Rector, as gentle an old man as ever unwillingly caned a boy, whose guileless soul was no match for our practised wiles. A remorseful howl put him instantly out of action, and he was always ready to be led sympathetically along the slippery paths of boyish excuses; for, however much the boy's soul may pine for just punishment, his body will always struggle to escape it. We had a singing-teacher, the organist of the Domkirke, whom, seeing that he was a helpless old bachelor without proper home or boys of his own, we accounted our lawful prey. Accordingly the candle snuffer sputtered with powder to his mild amazement, mice haunted the piano and struck unexpected chords at singing-school, and the blackboard sponge performed unheard-of antics as an impromptu foot-ball while the organist was writing our lesson on the board. It was when he happened to turn suddenly once and caught me in the very act of aiming it at his wig, that the worm turned. I was conducted

straight upstairs to the Rector, with *corpus delicti* in my grasp, and left to his mercy.

Rector rose mechanically from his papers when the door closed and opened a cupboard to afford me a private view of the stick standing there. Then he came over to me and said sternly, pointing to the sponge, "What is this?"

"The sponge, Herr Rektor," I said. "It was on the floor and I kicked it, like this — " it bounded across to the table — "and Niels, he — "

"Ah," Rector was all interest; "Niels, he — ?"

"He kicked it — so, and it landed where Hans stood."

"Eh!" he was rubbing his hands; "and Hans?"

"Hans, he sent it — this way — to Peter; and Peter trod on it, and it shied to Anders. And he — "

We were skipping across the room together, mapping out the journeys of the vagrant sponge as fast as Rector's gout allowed, when we arrived at the turn.

"It came back to me," I explained, "and I was just going to fire it — "

"Ha! you were just going to fire it — "

"When the organist turned and caught me."

The Rector stopped rubbing his hands abruptly. We gazed at one another soberly for a

"HA! YOU WERE JUST GOING TO FIRE IT—"

full minute. I don't know, I think I saw the suspicion of a wink; then:

"I think you said this was a sponge. Go then and tell the organist that you have discovered it is not a ball. Now go."

I went quickly. Unless my ears deceived me, I heard a chuckle behind the door as it fell to.

Little as he relished the job of thrashing a boy, the Rector hated meanness in him worse. It was the discovery of such a streak in me that brought me the most thorough caning of my school life at his hands. Hans and I, who perennially disputed the seat next to the head of the class — when it stood in a circle — had been engaged in a combat that was undecided when the bell summoned us to our lessons. Flushed with the hope of victory, Hans hit upon the idea of setting the clock ahead, that we might the sooner have it out. The clock was in our class room, and it was easily enough done, but in his eagerness Hans forgot prudence and set it three-quarters of an hour ahead, so that recitations were no sooner begun than they were at an end. Whereupon there was an investigation, and the culprit was found. This was a matter that called for the big stick, as being at once dishonest and foolish, and Hans was commanded to wait after school had gone home.

Now it befell that I was getting a book out of the library in the next room when Hans' shrieks

rose high between the dull thuds of "Master Erik." I will not attempt to excuse my conduct; I despise it. Probably the defeat I had so narrowly escaped rankled. I crept up to the door and listened. Meanly rejoicing at his plight, I pressed my ear to the key-hole to hear more, and leaned with my whole weight. I hadn't noticed that the door was not shut tight, and suddenly it swung open, and I fell into the other room with my arm full of books, — fell right at Rector's feet and lay sprawling there.

He gave me an amazed glance, paused an instant with uplifted stick, and comprehended. A look of stern disgust swept over his face; he let go of Hans and, seizing me, administered to me the worse half of the interrupted thrashing. Hans got square. I can see him yet as he stood in his corner wiping his eyes to keep from grinning. The utterly exasperating thing about it was the look of shocked innocence at the disclosure of such baseness that sat upon his face. As if he — ugh!

The good old Rector stands flanked by his

staff in the picture, in full dress, as beseems his dignity. My father is on his right, the only one

THE LATIN SCHOOL TEACHERS.

who wears a cap. Herr Kinch, behind the Rector, was an antiquarian of no mean repute, and

wrote the history of the Old Town,[1] making a notable contribution to Danish annals thereby. The venerable face that peers out beside him is that of Dr. Helms, whose interest in and writings about the Domkirke, through a long lifetime, finally bore fruit in the thorough restoration that has been just completed. We boys held the candle for him sometimes when he was poking in the dark corners for signs of the long past. Once he found what he was not looking for. It was while he was delving in the foundations of the Maria tower, which had been torn down a century or two before, being unsafe. They had covered up the foundations and shut them out of sight. But there must have been a crack somewhere, for when the good doctor broke into the dark space, thousands of bats broke out. The air was literally filled with the creepy things. The Old Town was at all times full of bats, and this was evidently one of their secret hiding-places. There were dead bats, too, by the cart load.

[1] It is upon his "History of Ribe Town," in two stout volumes, that I have drawn in these sketches for the ancient records that enliven its pages.

The other face in the doorway, that of Adjunct Koch, the same who in after years became Dean of the Domkirke, I can never see without thinking of the hour of my great triumph. He and Herr Trugaard were my history teachers. History as taught in the schools of those days was largely made up of interminable files of kings, with the years of their reign, nothing else, to be memorized that way. This I could not do, or would not; the result was the same, — a bad examination. But these two had discovered something. When the Great Examen came round again, instead of bringing up the tedious kings, they asked me to tell about the Hundred Days of Napoleon after Elba. Napoleon had not been dead forty years then, and there were people everywhere who had fought in his wars. We had one in our school, an old sergeant who drilled us in gymnastics. He had been through the campaign that ended at Waterloo, and was never tired of telling how it froze so hard in the winter of 1814 that they cut the wine for the army rations with axes, and of the

fighting he had seen, of course. Poor fellow! He looked too long upon the wine when it was red, and marched to his death in the river one winter's night singing a war-song, thinking perhaps he was at Borodino. They found him standing dead in the mud, upright, as a man and a soldier should, with his face to the foe who he imagined held the other shore.

I had sat at his feet when they strayed unsteadily toward the great past, many a time. And I needed no second invitation to enter upon the campaign of the Hundred Days. A sudden transformation came over that dusty class-room; for veterans sat in the Board of Censors. In five minutes I had them sitting up, eagerly scanning the camps of the French and the Allied Armies as I drew them. In ten they were on their feet, striding from Ligny to Quatre Bras, to the Wavre turnpike, objecting, applauding, disputing with me and with one another as I led them from field to field of slaughter and finally rounded them up at Waterloo, brought Blucher to the relief of Wellington in the nick of time,

and charged the Old Guard with a yell of "Surrender!" only to be met with the immortal reply: "The Old Guard dies, but never surrenders."

We sat down, a hot, excited band. There was a quiet gleam in Herr Trugaard's eye as he pronounced the unanimous judgment of the Board: "ug+," that is, A1 and to spare. It was the only "ug" I earned in my school days. It ought to have given the pedagogues food for thought, and perhaps it did.

The bell that once called the monks to prayers summoned us to school at a quarter to eight, and in the long winter we sang our morning hymn with the dawn struggling through the windows. When we trooped home again with knapsacks strapped on our backs, it was night once more. From eight to five was our day, with two hours for noon, the rule in all the Old Town's affairs. The bell regulated our lives as it had done since hour-glasses marked the time. It rings yet at the old hours, though the school-day is entirely changed, and Venus who rang it has long been gathered to her fathers. But when the Great

Examen drew near, it was too slow for our guilty consciences, and the night-watchman was bribed to wake us up. So that he should not rouse the whole house, a string was hung out of the window, the other end of which was tied securely to the sleeper's toe or ankle. The watchman's order was to pull it till the boy responded, and he did. Perhaps he took the chance to pay off old scores. He pulled and pulled with might and main, until a red and swollen foot shot up to the window and behind it an angry face yelling to let go. The boy was awake and up, and the watchman clattered on his way, chanting his morning verse:

> Ho! Watchman, our clock it has struck four!
> Eternal God, all honor
> In Heaven's choir to Thee,
> Thou who art watchman ever
> For us on earth that be.
> Now ended is our watch,
> For a good night
> Give God the thanks
> And mind ye well the time.

Before his song died away among the old houses, we were hard at work cramming for examination.

This service was set down to his credit when in Christmas week the watchman came to the door to "bid New Years." It was one of the customs of the Old Town that came down from the earliest days, happily shorn of some of its mediæval aspects. For then he came not alone, but the whole body of watchmen together, a kind of reconnoissance in force, to which the fact that the public executioner came with them lent a suggestion which no one could afford to let go unheeded. That it really was a kind of official blackmail is made apparent by certain ordinances passed in the Sixteenth Century which forbade the practice and fixed a regular schedule of charges for these public servants. The executioner was to have one dollar for chopping off a head or hanging a man, half a dollar for an ear, a dollar and a half for burning a witch at the stake, and so forth. It was not much. When one reads of his using twenty-two loads of wood for burning a single witch, it seems but poor pickings for a hard-worked man; but then he made up for it by having his hands full. He burned thirteen

witches between the years 1572 and 1652, and beheaded one. Of ears and such small fry no account seems to have been kept. Besides all this he was street-cleaning commissioner[1] and offal contractor, with the express proviso, however, that he must not himself engage in the latter business as beneath his dignity, but must farm it out to the town chimney-sweep. It will be seen that the executioner was by no means a disreputable man, but a functionary of importance who could not be allowed to go begging from door to door. As for the watchmen, they were ordered to desist not merely from that practice, but from monopolizing the moving business and from bossing weddings held in the Town Hall; likewise they must do no harm to drunken men in the street, but must help them home. One look at

[1] The river was included, I suppose; at all events, it contributed to his revenues. An old law provided that whoever polluted the stream by throwing any uncleanness into it should lose his life. The Thirteenth Century had a curious way of anticipating the things upon which the Twentieth prides itself with much vaunting. We cry out against water pollution; they prohibited it. It is easy to understand that there were no sewers in Ribe.

the mug they drank from at council meetings and still keep at the Town Hall gives a clew to the wherefore of this last ordinance: the councilmen themselves might have some trouble navigating after a protracted session.

The demand of these New Year pirates seems in the olden time to have been for "candles," perhaps a convenient medium of exchange. In our day it was frankly for cash. Not only the watchman, but every one who had during the year rendered the house any service, or might be expected to in the year to come, knocked, said "Happy New Year," and received a silver mark or an "eight-skilling," which was half a mark, as the case might be, with the thanks of the householder. The chimney-sweep was there, washed and cleaned for once, — on other days he made it a point to look "like his trade," — and the official mourner, who alternately bade the town to weddings and funerals, or gave notice that the stork had been around with a baby. A regular "cinch" had he, since sooner or later every well-regulated family must employ his service. His was a

real profession, and he kept a special face for each of his functions. When he was bidding to a funeral his gait was slow and measured, his face grave, and his voice had a mournful droop that matched his rusty black coat and ancient silk hat. If it was a wedding, he was cordial, his step was light and his tile was set at a rakish angle. The man was an artist. And so in their limited sphere were the funeral bearers, who were among our New Year's callers, too. They were a remnant from the days of the executioner, farther back even, to the time of the Black Death that killed half the people in

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

the town. Their guild was organized then, a sort of mutual insurance concern that made a man sure of getting underground at all events; and, having been established, stayed, as did everything else till it fell to pieces of itself. The aforesaid ordinances bear witness that it took much Dutch courage to carry the dead in the days of pestilence. There is one which forbids giving the "bearers" a barrel of beer at each funeral as wasteful and unseemly. The Old Town did some things after all that are worth considering. We do with less than a barrel in our day, but even when we do without it altogether, there is still waste enough about our funerals that is both unseemly and unfit in a Christian land.

The head of the house sat in state with a plate full of silver coins beside him on the day these callers made their rounds, and responded to each salutation in kind; said "Thank you, same to you," and handed the caller his coin. He twirled his cap, spat on the silver for good luck, put it in his pocket, scraped out, and made room for the next comer. If it was the night-watchman, he had

perhaps a word about the wind being in the northwest, "blowing up to a storm," or about the marten that ate the last batch of squabs. The marten lived in the attic under the roof beams, where it had its young in peace. It was not disturbed, though it made an occasional raid on the hen roost or the pigeon coop; but that was to be guarded against. To make up for it, it ate the rats that infested the old houses, and for this service it was let alone. We saw it sometimes on moonlight nights, a black shadow up among the pointed gables, big as a cat, it seemed to me, and with a cat's long tail. The watchman knew all its haunts, being a night prowler himself, and could tell when it was "getting too many" for the peace of the hen roost.

"WE SAW IT ON MOONLIGHT NIGHTS."

Then shot-guns came out, and after some still-hunting by moonlight things were evened up again and put upon a peace basis.

As pater familias sat awaiting his New Year's callers, he had the advantage always of knowing who was in the offing making for his door, and could arrange his contribution accordingly. That was because of the universal use of window reflectors, two mirrors set at an angle and fixed on the outside of the window. Sitting in your chair by it, you could tell who was coming from either side, half a block away. I often wonder why they are not more used on this side of the ocean. I should think they would be a great convenience if one did not wish to be "at home" for undesirable callers. Perhaps that was how the Bishop's wife escaped meeting the Burgomaster's lady they used to tell of in Copenhagen. They were not exactly friends, but their position required them to be agreeable before the world. So they exchanged visits, and upon one of these occasions the Burgomasterinde found the Bishop's Manse deserted, with evidences of hasty flight.

Now the good Bishop's wife was not noted nearly as much for tidiness as for her sharp wit, and the Burgomasterinde took a long chance when, seeing the mahogany table covered with a thick layer of dust, she wrote on it "P-i-g." But she felt better, no doubt, and went on her way rejoicing.

Some days later the two ladies met on the street. "Oh!" said the Burgomaster's wife, "I called at your house last week, but you were not in."

"Yes, I am so sorry," from the other, sweetly, "I found your card on the table."

They played the Old Town a trick once, those reflectors, that is hard to forgive. It was when the burghers who dwelt in the Main Street insisted upon the town removing the North Gate that obstructed their view. They "could not see past it." No more they could, for it fairly blocked the way. But it was the last remnant of the old walls, which, imperfect as they were, for they never reached around, had borne the brunt of many an assault, and it was over this the iron hand was fixed in the days of rigorous Ribe justice. It was a wretched fate that

sacrificed it to the whim of a lot of curious women who wanted to spy on their neighbors. However, they got their deserts. They had forgotten that the street turned just beyond the gate, and when it was down and out of the way, behold!

The North Gate.

they could see no farther than before. I do not know what they did. I know what sensible people said about it twenty years after. But I suppose the gate would have gone anyway, so it's no use grieving.

Speaking of women's ways, a fashion grew up

three hundred years ago of wearing their cloaks or petticoats over their heads instead of on their shoulders, in the street and to church, where, so shrouded, they slumbered peacefully through the sermon and, say the contemporary accounts, even slept at the altar-rail through the communion service. Talk about women wearing hats in church! Those cloaks became such a nuisance to the clergy that the practice was sternly forbidden in town council under penalty of a fine. Widows and mourners were excepted, but the latter only for six months. There is no mention of a petticoat revenue, so probably the practice ceased of itself.

A custom that made a deep impression on us children was the semi-annual "offering" in the Domkirke. Part of the revenues of priest and deacon was derived from free gifts of the people at Easter and Christmas — free, that is, to all appearances; but custom prescribed the exact amount of what was really a tax upon every householder. On these Sundays, when the last hymn had been sung and the sexton's purse on its

long pole had been poked into the farthest pew, the Dean put on his crimson robe with the big white cross down the back that made him look as if he were clad in the national flag, and took his place at the altar. The organist pulled a stop that set a little bell tinkling and started a silver star spinning in the organ loft. That was the signal for all the men to rise, and with the Amtmand, the Rector, and the Burgomaster leading on, they marched up to the altar and laid their gifts there in two piles, one for the priest, the other for the clerk, always silver, which made quite a heap before the last coin had clinked upon it. The organist always played the hymn with the longest and slowest metre while the procession was passing, to give it time, I suppose, and the order of procedure was rigidly maintained. For a boss carpenter, for instance, to have gone before a teacher in the Latin School, even though his offerings had been twice the size of the other's, would not have done at all. They kept step very well to the music, going and coming back, though I fancied their march was a little brisker on the

THE EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY.

return, as if they were glad it was over. Odd what impressions children get and keep. To me, looking back, it seems the one really great religious ceremony in the Domkirke I remember, always excepting the time the King came and one other. That was when the Austrian soldiers, during the occupation in '63–'64, celebrated the birthday of their Emperor with a high mass. There had not been a Catholic service in the cathedral since the Reformation, and there has not been one since. Perhaps it was that, perhaps it was the whole setting of august ceremonial and warmth and color that were foreign there; the uniforms, the bugles, the incense, with the strange tongue and the evident devotion of the soldiers who knelt on the marble floor — it all left an impression on my mind and heart that has never faded. It is rank heresy, of course, and I would never subscribe to it in cold blood, but it did seem somehow as if the old House of God came to its rights once more. Saints of old whose knees, bent in worship, had hallowed those ancient stones, walked again in the vaulted aisles,

and the image of the martyred Bishop Leofdag in the wall outside seemed to nod as with understanding as we went by. I saw the lights go out with regret. Perhaps, unknown to myself, it had something to do with my desire in years long after to put a couple of stained-glass windows in the chancel that looks so white and cold. But they did not want them. They were not in the style, they said. Perhaps they were right. But oh! for a little warmth in our worship now and then, even at the sacrifice of being right in the matter of style.

It may be that the fact that the Emperor's birthday came in summer, if my memory serves me right, had something to do with it. The most loyal friend of the Domkirke could not have sat out the services there in winter without discomfort. There was no way of heating it, had not been since the beginning of our century, when the "fire-pan" given to it by a pious burgher in 1473 was taken out and sold for old iron. A legacy went with it that was forever to keep it in coal, so that "the poor and the church-goers"

should not suffer from the cold. What became of that, I don't know. They did many queer things in the days before reverence for the great past, and its memories and landmarks, awoke with the struggle for nationality and for freedom in our own time. Among other things they stripped some of the ancient grave-stones of their beautiful engraved brass plates for the melting pot, when a new bell had to be cast. And down in Holstein, where the sacred banner that fell from heaven to the Danish knights in the Esthland crusade and saved the battle that was all but lost, had been left by the indifference of a later day in hostile hands, they took it at house-cleaning time and, esteeming it just a moth-eaten and tattered rag, burned it with other rubbish in the public road.

In Ribe, for a hundred years the people put on their overcoats and mufflers and their rubbers when they went to church and sat it out as they could; or else they stayed at home. Even so clothed we sat and shivered, our toes growing numb on the stone floor. When it was over, we

limped out and took a quick walk around the Castle Hill to "get up circulation." The walls of the Domkirke were thick, and it was past Christmas before the winter had quite moved in; but then it stayed well into the summer, refusing to be dislodged by spring until the roses were in bloom. In the great restoration, of which more hereafter, it was at last the upstart factory across the Linden Square, that had once so piqued the conservatism of the Old Town, which, having been by that time abandoned, gave its boiler house to be a heating plant for the church. And so the old and the new met once again, and atonement was made for past misconduct.

I have spoken of the square red tower which, though part of the Domkirke, and its great and distinguishing feature seen from afar, did yet belong under the civil government as the stronghold of the burghers in time of trouble, typifying curiously the union of church and state, and crumbling slowly like that in my day. It had given fair warning to more than one generation. There was a house in Priest Street, straight up

from the tower, with the old arms of the town picked out in colors above its door, which I never could pass without a shudder. As far as that, tradition had it, the tower fell on Christmas morning in the year 1283, when it collapsed during early mass while the church was full of people. Very many were killed. It was in the time after the death of the great Valdemar when the country was torn by dissension within and onslaught from without. An earthquake had shaken the land eleven years before, probably contributing its share to the insecurity of the tower, and one can imagine the "great fear that prevailed" among the people. Again in 1594 the upper part of the tower fell, and in the rebuilding it received the shape and height which it has kept.

The tower falcon, a fierce-eyed, solitary bird of prey, was its rightful tenant in my day; had been, I fancy, from the beginning. He seemed to fit in with its warlike traditions. The boys caught him in traps, sometimes, and kept him chained about the house, but never for long,

for he was utterly untamable and his shriek was not melodious. Furthermore, his diet of meat, preferably live mice, kept us scurrying in a way we quickly tired of. The falcon has moved. A score of years ago they overhauled the village church at Seem, three miles up the river, and dislodged a family of rooks that lived there. In search of new quarters they struck the Domkirke, liked it, and stayed. The newcomers were great chatterers, while the falcon is a silent bird, and moreover they brought all their relations. In disgust, I suppose, at the racket they made, the falcon betook himself to the Plantage and became a dweller in trees. My boy reports that he is there yet. He has been up to see. The rooks stayed and multiplied exceedingly. At least I supposed them to be rooks, till, last summer, I stood on the top of the tower in Windsor Castle and was told by the caretaker that the black birds hopping about were jackdaws. They were the very same.

Jackdaws or rooks, they took possession of the big tower and of the little one, and they have

kept it since. By day they go afield for their food; but sundown always finds them in loud and general debate on the stone railing of the red tower. They sit in military files discussing the subject in hand in very human fashion: now one at a time, and again all together, squawking at the top of their voices. Year by year their number grows, since no marten can reach them on their roost. There came a time when it seemed as if something ought to be done, if they were not to practically own the town. The matter came up in council, and the debate that ensued was worthy of the best days of the Old Town. The consensus of opinion was that they were getting to be a nuisance; but how to stop it was another matter.

"They are here," said one of the city fathers, "and what are you going to do about it?" There was no answer. Upon the question what was their diet no one could shed any definite light; but it suggested a ray of hope to one.

"They might," he ventured, "be good to eat." The city fathers considered one another thought-

fully. They were certainly fat. If they were to turn out a new kind of game, now! It ended, after long debate, in a committee being appointed to take the matter under practical advisement, with directions to report at a future meeting whether the rooks were good eating, or, if not, how they disagreed with a councilman's stomach. Six months had passed when last I fished with a member of the committee. He screwed up his mouth and shook his head dubiously as he made a cast for a pickerel hiding in the rushes.

"They are fat, yes," he said ruefully. "They might be good, and then again — they might make you sick."

Caution, says an ancient Danish proverb, is the virtue of a burgomaster. It ought at least to be the privilege of a councilman.

A friend who, like myself, had long been in foreign parts where they have other ways, once told me that he believed the Danes had no business capacity, at least the Danes who stayed at home, because he found them charging the big summer hotel a cent more for milk than

they exacted from the poor fishermen who lived on the shore; and when he asked them why, he was told that "the hotel took so much more and it was more trouble." But in the first place that was true; and, further, I think it was their inborn sense of fairness plus their stubborn democracy that was breaking out there. The small folk were to be protected against the wealthier neighbor. A people without business capacity would never have thought of the expedient the Old Town hit upon in a dispute with the local gas company, long after I had gone away. The sidewalks are narrow, with never room for more than one, and the nights are sometimes very dark. So, as the gas company refused to give in and the town refused to burn gas till it did, and consequently, all parties to the quarrel being Jutlanders, there was no telling when the dispute would be settled, if ever, the council ordered that the lamp-posts be painted white to avoid collision and suits for damages. If that is not business sense, what is it?

No. The Old Town moves with deliberation, it is true. But then, the rest of us are in too much of a hurry. No one ever is, there. What is there to run after? The clock that has counted the hours since before Napoleon stirred up the dry bones of Europe still stands in its corner and ticks the seconds, the hours, the years, twice a day pointing its slow finger to the date graven on its face: 1600–1700–1800 — why should one hurry? If we but wait, the years will come to us and carry us with them to our long rest. And there will be others where we are now. The world will move; men will live and labor and love; and the old clock will tick in the hall, counting the hours, the days, the years. It is the Old Town's philosophy. If it has not made it rich, or powerful, or great, it has made it content. Who shall say then that it is not as good as the best?

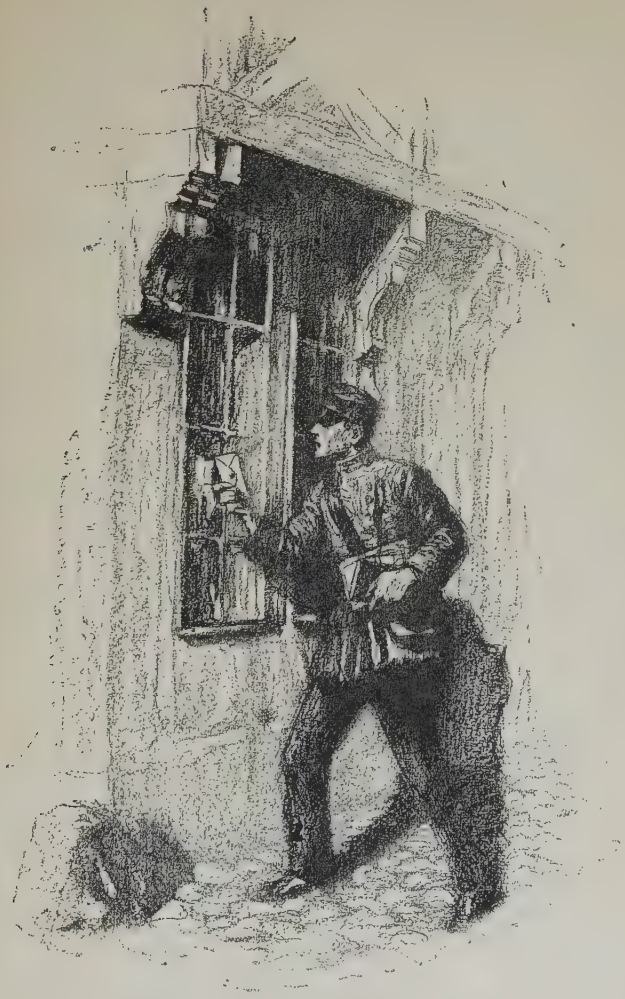
There is one that ticks in a house I know of where eyes I loved smiled to it and nodded to it every day in passing. In 1792 it was made in Ribe, where famous clock-makers lived then.

I tried to buy it; I offered two hundred kroner for it, which was a small fortune to the Old Town. But its owner shook his head. It had been in the family since his great-great-great-grandfather, and it would stay there as long as there were any of them left. I shook his hand. I should have been sorry had he been willing to sell. It would have been like betraying an old friend. They were poor, but they were loyal. It was the Old Town all over. Years ago the last of the clock-makers lived in Black Friars Street, in our block. One morning there was a great crash. It was their house that had fallen down. The neighbors hastened up to help, and when a way had been made through the wreck, found the old man and his wife lying calmly in bed. The beams had formed a shelter over them, and they were safe till the next cave-in. They urged them to hurry out, but the old couple refused. It was their home. They had always lived in it and, now they were old, would die in it if need be rather than seek another. They were like Heine's lovers:

Wir Beide bekümmern uns um nichts
Und bleiben ruhig liegen.

They had to take them out by force.

No need of haste. The mail-coach waited for you in the old days, once you were registered as a passenger, till you came. It would have been base to desert you. The train waits now till you climb aboard and station-master and conductor have exchanged the last item of news. The red-coated mail-carrier taps on your window with the expected letter and a sympathetic "It's come." The telegraph messenger who meets you in the street with his message goes home with you to hear the good news; he knows it is good. The mill-wheels drone in the stream their old drowsy lay that was old when you were born. Down by the castle garden a worn wheel whirs and hums in the rope-walk where father and son go spinning their endless cord, side by side, as did their people before them as far back as any one can remember. Why should one hurry? The sun sinks low in the west. Far upon the horizon there is a gleam

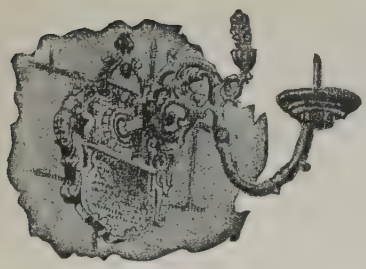


"It's come."

of silver: it is the sea, sleeping in a calm. The bells of the Old Town peal forth their even song. The cows come home from the meadows. In the Cloister shadows trembling hands are trimming the evening lamp, tired old feet tottering to their rest. A day is ended. Above blossoming gardens the stork looks down from its nest, wiser than the world of men: another will dawn. So that its evening be peace, what matters the rest? It is the message of the Old Town.

CHAPTER IX

OUR BEAUTIFUL SUMMER



THE ACCURSED CANDLESTICK.

To us it will always be "our beautiful summer," I expect, and, indeed, I fancy it will be so remembered throughout the Danish land.[1] For the seasons there had suffered a sad decline since my boyhood days. Then the sun shone always in summer, the autumn days were ever mellow as the ripened nuts we shook from the hazel bushes, and in winter we skated from Christmas until the March winds woke the slumbering spring. At least so it seems to me now. They tell me that this generation of boys has almost forgotten the art of skating; that they do not know how to cut the figure 8, or the name of the girl they like best, in the ice, because

[1] The summer of 1904, the year of our home-coming.

there is no ice more than half the time; that in summer they have to hurry so between showers that all the fun is gone out of the haying. And as for the autumn, I am not likely to forget one that found me stranded there, sick and desolate just as the century was closing; the long, wakeful nights I lay listening to the storm shaking my window and whistling through the cracks as if it were mocking my helplessness, with four thousand miles of tempestuous sea between me and home. I sailed them all in those night-watches, with never a rift in the pitiless gray skies, till I saw at last a coast lying golden in the sunset, and knew it from the way my heart leaped within me for the Blessed Isles where home was. It was then I learned that I, too, belonged here where my children were born.

But this summer was one long holiday without a cloud. The sun set in yellow glory on that June day when we landed, hours after children should be in bed and asleep; but how could one ask it in reason, with the day, as it seemed, only half over? And it rose in undimmed splendor

on the September morn that saw us wave tearful good-bys and sail away, past Hamlet's Castle and Elsinore, and leave our fairyland behind. We rode in on the hay wagons, we saw the sheaves of golden grain stacked and housed. We watched day by day the stalks of Indian corn by the fountain in the King's Square grow ears as big as any in Kansas fields. They were flaunting great shocks of shining silk when we went away, to the admiration of the good people of Copenhagen, who were never tired of looking at the strange plant; and I, with the memories of Long Island strong upon me, was deep in a plot to teach that gardener how to make "hot corn," since ripen they would not, those ears, when my wife came along and wrecked that dinner and my reputation with one swoop by declaring that "they were not that kind, but common chicken corn." I never knew until then that there was any difference. But, sweet corn or chicken-feed, dinner or no dinner, it was truly a beautiful summer. All Denmark will bear me out in that.

We had gone, we old folk, to see once more the fields where we played when we were children, and to us there was in it the sadness of the long ago. To the young it was a joyous picnic; and many a time their laughter in the quiet streets, where ghosts walked in broad daylight to our sight at every turn, made us stop and listen wistfully. For in the Old Town nothing was changed. The stork stood one-legged upon the peak of the red-tiled roof, holding majestically aloof from the ways of men; and in the doorway the swallow hatched her young as of old. There was the broken pane in the transom I knew so well, to let her in, the right of way for which she paid in coin of sweetest song. I know they laughed at me for calling it song; but then they had not been away a lifetime. No mocking-bird or nightingale sings to my heart as does the house-swallow's cheery note. In it are summer and sunshine, and the blossoming lilacs, and the whisper of the breeze in the trees, the children calling to each other at their play. It is as the time I had sat through an

hour of Christina Nilsson, missing something — I knew not what — in all the wealth of music, when all at once came "'Way down upon the Suwanee River," and melted the icicles away. It is many years since, but the mist comes into my eyes at the thought of it. That is how the swallow sings to me in the streets of old Ribe.

Down in the river the white swans arched their necks as in the days that were, and the clatter of the mill-wheels by the dam came up with drowsy hum, heavy with the burden of the centuries. For Ribe was an old city when Christian bishops first preached peace to the savage North. In the wall of its great cathedral there is a stone that once bore the image of the earliest among them who fell before pagan arrows in the very meadow where we had our boyish games. The storms of many winters have nearly worn it away; but what reverent loyalty vainly sought to preserve, the bigotry of a day that thought itself wise as well as pious ignorantly achieved in commemoration of human hate. When they came to knock away

the whitewash of the Reformation, put on to hide what sand and soap and acids could not efface (there are clear marks of their having been used to destroy the pictures of apostles and saints painted in Catholic days on the great granite pillars), there came to light, in one of the arches pointing toward the place of Bishop Leofdag's martyrdom, a strange figure in kilts with fists upraised in threat and curse, which presently was seen to be a heathen raging against the new day that dared rear a temple to the Christians' God upon the very site of the ancient sacrifices. The whitewash had kept it from decay. The recollection of it came over me

A Strange Figure in Kilts.

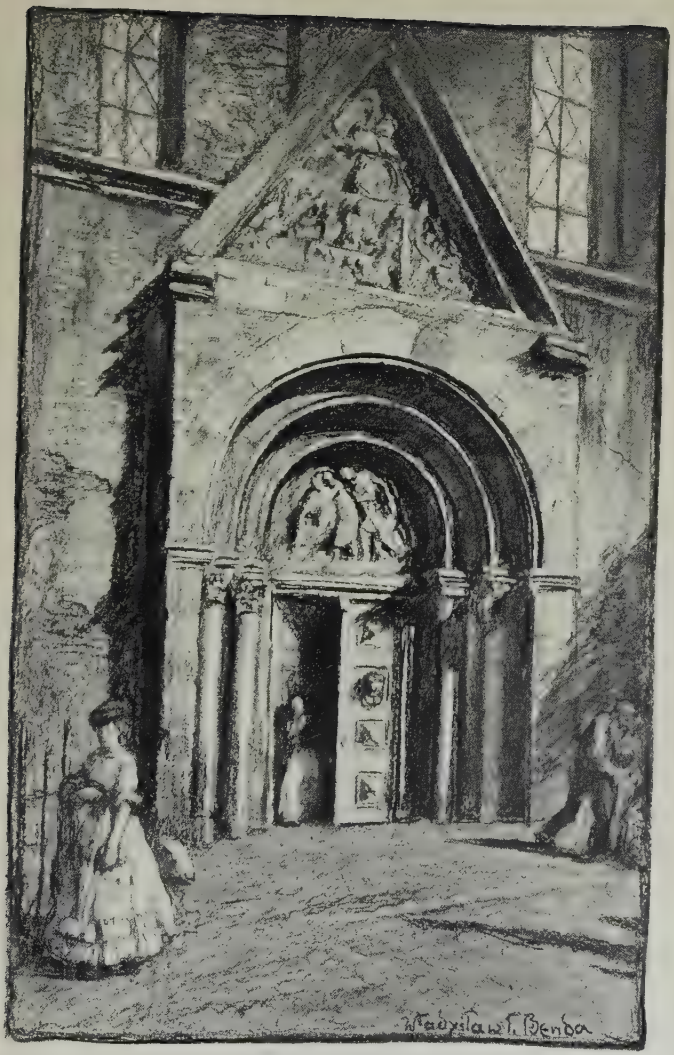
THE RESTORED DOMKIRKE.

with a rush of gratitude that the world is growing better and broader and all the time farther into the light, when, the other day, I sat in the beautiful chapel of the Leland Stanford University that was built "to the glory of God" and to no sect or set of mortals. Some one had told the organist that I was there, and upon the waves of soft music that floated out into the twilight hour there came snatches of a Danish hymn I had not heard since childhood until twenty-five hundred men and women sang it in the old church the day we rededicated it, and this time "to the glory of God," with no wish to make reservation. Ay! let the heathen rage, within the sanctuary and without. It stands there despite them, witness that the light drives out darkness, love conquers hate.

Eight hundred years the old Dom of Ribe had borne its testimony, when its crumbling walls gave warning that nothing that is of earth is imperishable, and now, after many years of labor, it stood restored. It was to its birthday we had come home. Morning, noon, and even-

ing our steps turned toward it; and when at night the old town had settled down to its fireside chat, and only the organist was musing over the old hymns in his loft, my feet found the familiar paths. They needed no guide here, even where the shadows lay deepest. There was the pillar with the mark of the great flood that two hundred years ago [1] at the Christmastide made ten thousand homes desolate upon the Danish coast. Though the Dom stands upon the highest spot in town, anciently called the mountain because it was at least ten feet above the level of the river, the water rose man-high within it. We boys used to measure up against the mark, and wonder if we would ever grow to be so tall. There was the oaken door with great bronze rings worn thin and light that bore their own testimony to those days and their ways. The powerful bishops who built the Dom and gave it renown were fighting men. It was the custom of their day. The

[1] October 11–12, 1634. The worst flood in Danish history. Over twenty-two thousand persons perished in it, all along the coast. In one village hard by Ribe — Melby — only one young man was left alive.



THE CAT-HEAD DOOR.

one who laid its foundation fell in battle before the walls were fairly above ground. But at home they wore the mitre, and knew how to make even the King hold his hand at the door of the sanctuary. To all men it was that literally; hence the worn rings. How many appealing hands had grasped them with despairing grip, no one may ever tell; but this much is certain, that the appeal was not in vain. The iron hand was over the town gate, indeed, symbol of the rigor of human justice that demanded an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but at the church door a mightier was raised to stay it, at least until the case had been heard by the tribunal that claimed power to loose and to bind in the world to come as in the one that is.

The Cat-head Door, as we called it, because of the lions' heads wrought upon it, long since ceased to play other part than to frighten us children. It was nearest the altar, and, with that curious incongruity that in the popular superstition assigned to Satan an abode in the church when it was forsaken at night, we boys

had been told how we could bring him out by walking thrice around the building and calling each time through the key-hole of that door, "Come out!" The third time he would appear. I do not think any of us believed it; but many a dark night — it was only at such times that speech was to be had with his Satanic Majesty — I have made one of a party to test the power of the spell. We made the circuit of the Domkirke bravely enough twice, albeit we lagged a little on the second lap; but invariably when we approached the Cat-head Door on the third, a wild panic would seize us, and we ran as if the devil were after us in very truth.

Silly? Of course it was. But in Ribe it was bred in the bone. Barely within the door that held us in such terror, haven of refuge though it had once been, was the accursed candlestick, with its blasphemous ban upon whoever should presume to move what some purse-proud burgher had hung there to celebrate his own littleness, persuading himself and his time, perhaps, that it was also to the glory of God. In

such fashion had he succeeded that stories of how disaster had befallen when impious hands

THE OLD CLOISTER-CHURCH.

were stretched forth to touch it were whispered yet in my school days. The sexton had fallen from the ladder, the architect had died suddenly, etc. Silly, certainly. But with every spade-thrust in the earth disclosing forgotten cemeteries, buried cloister walls, and secret burrows; with the watchmen at night droning forth their chants of five hundred years ago in the dark shadows of the Domkirke; with the deep voice of its bell counting the hours, the bell that hung in the great tower when men

went to war clad in iron — and little else they did in that country in those days; with the very street names proclaiming the past on every hand: Black Friar Street, Gray Friar Street, Priest Street, Bishop Street, Monk Street, Cloister Street, Castle Street, Grave Street — mere names now, it is true, but eloquent of things long dead — why, the wonder was, not that we were still so little, but rather that we had grown so big in our world ghosts.

To one they had put up a marble tablet since I was a boy. There it was, set in the wall of the old house:

> Here lived the tailor Laurids Splid, whose poor wife, Maren, on November the 9th, 1641, was burned for witchcraft on the gallows hill.

A hundred years after the Reformation! Was there a maniac epidemic that swept the world and swept men's reason away, as the Black Death did their lives in that fatal century? Fifty years later still, they hanged the witches at Salem, Massachusetts. They did not burn them, so I was informed once, when I fell into

the error, by a scandalized citizen of that righteous commonwealth. They were not savages, he would have me know. The Ribe Christians had some bowels too. They tied a pound of powder on the woman's back before they flung her into the fire, and so cut her sufferings short. Surely the devil came out of his hiding-place that day and helped feed the fire. The house in which Maren lived stands unchanged, except for a coat of paint, across the way from the jail. She confessed, is the record. Oh, yes! the Seventeenth Century had not forgotten the ways of the Inquisition, any more than the Twentieth has the fire when its passions are aroused, though the merciful pound of powder is left out. Perhaps it was a coincidence, but there was no swallow's nest in that hall, with hungry mouths of little ones gaping to be fed, and no peaceful stork upon the roof. Even the rats shunned it: a weasel lived in the attic.

Poor Maren's travail was brief, let us hope. Down the street there lived a man with whom it went through a life rich in benediction to his

kind. A bishop was he, and a singer whose songs will live as long as the Danish tongue. He sang of human sorrow and travail and of the land yonder where the tears are wiped away, until one who did not know went to him once with a sneer. Easy for him to speak of trouble who had none — rich, well housed, all his lines cast in pleasant places! Bishop Brorson heard him out with a sad little smile.

"Come with me," he beckoned, when he had done, and led the way to the top story of the house. There, in a room made strong with iron bars, sat his son, caged like a wild beast, a raving maniac.

"There," he said, with a sigh that must have seared the man's soul to his dying day — "there is my trouble." The mark of the bars is there yet, — there were no insane asylums in those days, — but the good bishop's troubles are long over.

So I wandered, and whithersoever I strayed, back to the Dom I came and lingered there. There was the seat in which She sat, in her fair

girlhood, during the long Sunday sermons, while I was banished to the "men's side" across the aisle. Yonder the door through which we had come in together on the day of our betrothal, when the doing gave notice to all the world forever after to hold its peace; and down this aisle we had walked, hand in hand, with the old parson's blessing in our ears and our hearts, out into the world that had suddenly become glorified. And now, across the Square, there hung from a window She and I both well knew, the flag of freedom and of hope under which we were growing old together. I wanted it so that when we came back we should be within sight of the Domkirke and as near to it as might be. For the church is as much part of my life as is the memory of my father and mother. Indeed, it is a big part of the life of the Old Town, all of its past and more than half of the present.

With might and main did we wave our flag when the King came. For days the silent street had echoed with the tramp of troops come from far-off garrison towns to receive him. The

children stared; they had never seen soldiers. In us of the past generation it touched a wound that ached still. Forty years had not made us forget those winter nights of weary waiting for our beaten army on its way to the north, its face still to the foe that followed fast. That spring we saw our country cut in twain and a wall of bayonets drawn between us and our brothers to the south. King Christian had not forgotten, either, the great tragedy of his and the nation's life. I saw it in his furrowed face as he looked up at old Dannebrog flying from the church tower. Perhaps he thought of the thousands of hungry eyes riveted upon it across the frontier. Up there at least the enemy could not reach it, though he tore it from their homes.

But if the ghost sat at the banquet, no one gave any sign. In fact, no one did anything but run and shout for three whole days. It was Ribe's one chance to cheer its King, and it dropped all else and went at it with a rush. Fifty times a day the alarm was given: "Here they come!" and men, women, and children ran

and swung their hats and cheered until they were red in the face. We too. My little boy had announced with republican dignity that "he guessed the President was more than any King," but when he saw the kind old face of King Christian he swung his flag and yelled louder than any of us.

"Gee! Mamma," he said, when it was over for the moment, "I didn't know it was like that. I just had to."

The very guard at the fire-house that was there to rush out and toot and present arms whenever one of the red-coated royal drivers came into view on the box of a coach, lost its bearings and turned out to salute a scarlet-clad letter-carrier in the twilight. That the bugler discovered his mistake, choked off his tune in the middle, and so took the whole town into the joke, was as it should be. We were in it, all of us, and, as young America remarked, "up to the neck!" All except the cows. They had been warned off the streets during the King's stay by police ordinance. Ordinarily they have

the right of way, being taken back and forth twice a day, to and from the pasture. But now they must keep away three whole days. The police force of Ribe put the case to me convincingly:

"'Tain't only for the sake of the streets," he said; "we don't mind they're dirty; but s'pposin' they came up against the Bishop and the parsons paradin' — them cows is lawless beasts — they wouldn't let them pass, no more they wouldn't."

Hence their banishment and the singular pageant of numberless led cows, in charge of little boys, that paraded through the streets on the last day of their freedom. They wanted to see as much of the show as they could while they had the chance. And see it they did — greens, flags, flowers, and all. Into the very yard of our hotel I found one youngster leading his cow to see the tent they were putting up there for the overflow, and also the flag that Hans Petersen, or Peter Hansen, or somebody, had hoisted in his back-yard, where no one could see it but he

himself. But then, was he nobody? It was his chance to show his loyal good-will, and he took it, as did all the rest of us.

The rising sun found an orchestra of bare-headed men on top of the church tower "blowing in" the festival with old hymn tunes, that all might hear and rejoice. That is one use the big tower is put to. Of another the fat stone balusters that hedge in its top give a hint under close scrutiny. Three or four of them have been replaced by wooden ones with copper skins. The old were shot away in a duel with the Swedes who had taken the castle in the seventeenth century and were pelted with cannon-balls from the tower. Truly, the Church militant! but the tower was built in the beginning for warfare. The centuries and the Church — perhaps also the modern artillery — tamed it slowly. As the day wore on, one excitement followed another. A big blow brewed in the west, and by the middle of the afternoon the North Sea itself came in to have a look at the King. Where the cows had been pastured, suddenly

there was water, and the royalties turned out, eager to see the famed "storm flood." But the wind died down, and the cows went back to their own. Night found the Old Town in a blaze of light. In every window of every house stood lighted candles; the river was alive with boats carrying colored lanterns and joyous singers. Above it all a black cloud of bewildered rooks flew with loud squawks from the old Cloister to the Dom and back again, frightened out of their night's rest, and thinking, no doubt, that the end of the world had come.

Old King Christian had tears in his eyes when he arose at the banquet to thank his people, and so had we all of us when he broke down utterly and pleaded for patience "with an old man eighty-six years and over." And then he gave me the surprise of my life; for in the midst of it all he sent one of the gold-gallooned lackeys to tell me that he desired to drink to my health, and did. Now you may call me a snob, or anything else you like; I own that I was never so proud in all my days. For there

sat my old townsmen, with whom I had been, shall we say, just a bit off-color in spite of all, because I did not do according to the rules, but broke over the traces every way, and went off to America to do mercy knows what outlandish stunts in the way of earning a living. There they sat now, in their own town, and saw the King himself toast me before their very faces! I did think my measure was full when I beheld the President of the United States take my wife in to dinner in the White House — I

KING CHRISTIAN COMES FROM CHURCH.

know I nearly burst with pride in her and in him —but now, indeed, it was running over. In self-defence, lest I grow vain and foolish, I had to pinch myself, and remember the Iowa farmer who sized me up last winter. I met him going to one of my lectures, and when he found out that I was the man who was to speak, he looked me up and down, and passed verdict thus:

"Well, now, you never kin tell from lookin' at a toad how far he'll jump!"

Back to the soil, is the proper cure for the big head any day.

Now that I am back home I can speak of another surprise that befell, if the little people can be left out the while. They might not understand. It was when I looked my classmates from the Latin School over. There were fifteen of us, and the thirteen took the strait and narrow road. They were good and they prospered. Hans and I were the black sheep who perennially disputed the dunce's seat on the last bench, and disputed pretty much everything else. It seems that we never found time to learn for

fighting, and no doubt the class felt it as a relief when we quit, out of season, Hans to go into business where he belonged, I to learn a trade. And now, after a lifetime, what was my surprise to find that of the whole fifteen the two whom the King had singled out for decoration with his much-coveted cross were — Hans and myself. The thing came to me with a stunning sensation when I saw the ribbon pinned on Hans's coat that day; and when we were together in his home at tea, it worked out into my consciousness.

"Hans," I said, "did it occur to you — "

A motion of his hand stayed me. "Fritz!" he called, sharply, "time you were at your lessons," and not until the door had closed upon the reluctant retreat of the son of the house did he turn to me with a twinkle in the eye.

"Yes," he said, "it did. We got through somehow, but on your life don't you let the boy hear. He is in it now."

All things come to an end, and this did too. When the King was gone and Ribe had settled

down to talk it over, I had my chance of getting even for sundry little digs at my home across the seas that I had scored up. They will do it; it is in the blood. To the old country, when it is as old as Ribe, we shall remain, I suppose, to the end of time a lot of ex-savages, barely reclaimed from the woods and scalp-locks and such, and in the nature of things not made to last. It was at a social gathering where the one all-absorbing topic was the Domkirke, that the worm turned. The walls would stand now a hundred years, some one said, and shot a pitying glance at me, that said as plainly as speech: "Your whole republic isn't much older than that, and where will it be in another hundred?" But I had been up in the roof of the church the day before with the boss carpenter to look at the big beams, and something there seemed familiar. To my question he nodded: Yes! he had bought the lot on the sea, a ship load of American timber, pitch-pine, and there it was. So I was not slow to rise to my friend's bait.

"And," I added, when I had told them, "your walls of old-world stone may stand a hundred years on your own showing; or give them two. But the carpenter told me that, barring accidents, there is no reason why the roof of American timber should not last a thousand and be as good as new." I think I scored.

But we bore no grudges. I owe them too much for that. The sun shone so brightly upon my mother's new-made grave, which hands of loving friends had garlanded with flowers against her boy's home-coming; the grass was so green and the thrush sang so sweetly in the hedge, that the sting went out also of that sorrow and only the promise remained. It is good to have lived, and though its days be mostly gray under northern skies, glad am I that mine were framed in the memories of the Old Town. We sought and found it together, She and I, the house in which I dreamed as a boy, in the street of the Black Friars. The window-pane was still there upon which I wrote "From here I can see Elisabeth's garden" beyond the river, heaven knows

with what stylus to cut so deep. With a dozen little mouths to feed in our home, diamonds were not lying loose there. The trees have grown and shut garden and stream out of sight. But the river divides us no longer, and though the shadows lengthen and the frost is upon our heads, into our hearts it cannot come. Hand in hand, we look trustfully across to that farther shore, to the land of the rising sun where we shall find what we vainly seek here: our youth in the long ago.

So we came home. I shall not soon forget the morning when, to the wondering sight of our thousand immigrants, the panorama of the great world city rose out of the deep. They crowded the rail of the steamer as it came slowly up through the Narrows. Clad in their holiday clothes, they stood in quiet groups, gazing silently toward the land, all the fun and the horse-play of the voyage gone out of them. To the jester of the steerage it was but a dull mood, and, thinking to cheer them, he leaped upon a chest and harangued the crowd, telling them

in their own language that they were coming to a land where the golden rule read, "Do others or they will do you."

"Cheer up!" he shouted, "and let's have a song. Who can give us a jolly one?"

There was no answer. Till somewhere in the crowd a lone, far-away voice began a verse of an old Norwegian hymn and sang it to the end in a clear alto. There was a little uneasy laugh in the corner by the wheel-house, but as the singer went on, never faltering, here and there a voice fell in, and before he had come to the end of the second verse it swelled in one common strain: "On this our festal day." Everybody was singing. The jester had disappeared. He was forgotten, as they looked out, men and women, with folded hands toward their Promised Land. I thought of my friend who fears for our democracy, and wished he were there to hear his answer. For it *was* the answer. Such as these have its hope in keeping.

KING FREDERIK AT HOME

KING FREDERIK AT HOME

I HAD never met King Frederik — the Crown Prince he was then — until the summer of 1904, which we spent at Copenhagen. As a boy I had seen him often and pulled off my cap to him, and always in return had received a bow and a friendly smile. But at home, and to speak to, I had not met him till that summer. We were at luncheon at our hotel one day, nothing further from our thoughts than princes and courts, when the *portier* came in hot haste to announce a royal lackey who wished speech with me. Right behind him up loomed the messenger, in his gold lace and with his silver-headed cane ever so much more imposing a

figure than the King himself. "Their Royal Highnesses, the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess," so ran his message, "desired our attendance at dinner at Charlottenlund the next day but one."

"The dickens they do," I blurted out, fortunately in English, with a vision of silk hats and regalia of which I had none. But my wife pulled my sleeve and saved the day. "Would he thank their royal highnesses very much; we should be glad to come," was the way it went into Danish. Whereupon he bowed and went, leaving us staring helplessly at one another. I think we were both disposed to back out; but the children decided it otherwise. Of course we must go. Such an honor!

So we went. After all, it was simple enough. I just borrowed a top hat (that did not fit; I was glad to carry it in my hand in the presence of royalty, for it simply would not come down over my head; it was three sizes too small). The rest was easy. We drove out with the American Minister and his wife, who were in-

vited too. It was for a long time after a disputed question in our family whether it was the cross of Dannebrog I wore on my breast, and therefore me, the sentinels saluted; or the American Minister. But he wore no cross. My wife insisted mischievously that it must be his carriage. Could she have seen herself, charming princes and princesses alike with her sweet and gracious ways, there would have been no mystery. Where she passed, everybody was made glad. They saluted from sheer desire to do it. And then, we were guests of royalty.

Charlottenlund lies in the forest just outside Copenhagen, on the beautiful Shore Road. It blew in from the water, and the ladies, on account of their hats, preferred to ride backwards. And so, chatting and laughing, we wheeled into the palace grounds before we knew we were halfway, and found ourselves heading a procession of royal carriages bent for the palace. They were easily known by their scarlet-coated drivers. We had barely time to change around, to get our wives properly seated, when the door

of the carriage was yanked open and lackeys swarmed to help the ladies. In we went. Almost before we could draw breath a door was thrown wide, our names were announced, and the Crown Princess came forward with outstretched hand.

"It was very good of you to come out to us," she said.

Our entrance had been so sudden, due to the hustle to make way for the princes following close upon us, and in thought and speech we had been so far away during the trip, that the Danish greeting left me for the moment dumb, groping my way four thousand miles across the sea. Slowly and laboriously, as it seemed to me, I found the tongue of my childhood again, but awkward beyond belief. This is what it said:

"How very respectable of you to ask us."

The Crown Princess looked at me a moment, uncertain what to think, then caught the look in my wife's face, and laughed outright. At which the Prince came up and heard the explanation, and we all laughed together. The

next moment the room was filled with their children, and we were introduced right and left. It was all quite as neighborly and as informal as if we had been at home. Fine young people, all of them; finest of them all Prince Karl, who is now King Haakon of Norway. Handsome, frank, and full of fun and friendliness, he was both good to look at and to speak with; and in that he resembled his father. They all have the slender, youthful shape of the old King. But for his furrowed face and the tired look that often came into it in the last few years, no one would have thought him over fifty, though he was nearly ninety. The Crown Prince at sixty-one seemed barely forty.

My wife was taken in to dinner by a prince, a shy, boyish young fellow, whose great ambition, he confided to her, was to live in a New York sky-scraper and shoot up and down in the elevator, which was entirely contrary to her inclinations, and she told him so. I was not so lucky, but I shall always remember that evening with unalloyed pleasure for the hearty

and unaffected hospitality of our hosts and of everybody. The Crown Prince talked of America and its people with warm appreciation, and of President Roosevelt as a chief prop of the world's peace, at the very time when some people at home were yet shouting that he was a firebrand. He thought him a wonderful man, and we did not disagree. The thing that especially challenged his admiration was his capacity for work — for getting things done. That any one could get access to him in a nation of eighty millions, and get a hearing if he was entitled to one, seemed to him marvellous. He was interested in everything done for the toiler in our great cities, and heard with visible interest of the progress we were making in the search for the lost neighbor. The talk strayed to the unhappy conditions in Russia, the Jewish massacres, and the threatening unrest. My wife was expressing her horror at the things we read, and I began to feel that we were skating on very thin ice, seeing that the Czar was the Crown Prince's nephew, when I heard him say to her,

with great earnestness, "You may believe that if my sister had the influence many think, many a burden would be eased for that unhappy people." And my heart swelled with gratitude; for Crown Prince Frederik's sister, the Czar's mother, was the sweet Princess Dagmar whom every Danish boy loved when I was one of them, unless he were the sworn knight of Alexandra, her beautiful sister.

After dinner we strayed through the garden that lies in the shelter of the deep beech forest, and when it was bed-time the boys, including my wife's cavalier, came to kiss their father good-night. It was all as sweet a picture of family happiness as if it were our own White House at home, and it did us good to witness. I think our host saw it, for when we shook hands at the leave-taking he said: "You have seen now how happily and simply we live here, and I am glad you came. Now, take back with you my warm greeting to your great President, and tell him that we all of us admire him and trust him, and are glad of the prosperity of his people — your people."

He had expressed a wish to my wife to read our story, and I sent to London for a copy of "The Making of an American," which he fell to reading at once, according to his habit. They say in Denmark that he reads everything and never forgets anything, and has it all at his fingers' end always. I had proof of that when we next met. It was in the Old Town at the reopening of the Domkirke. I was coming out of our hotel at seven in the morning, and in the Square ran plumb into a gentleman in a military cloak, who had a young man for company and a girl of fifteen or sixteen.

"Good morning, Mr. Riis," said he. "I hope you are well, and your wife, since last we met."

It must surely be that I am getting old and foolish. The voice I knew; there are few as pleasing. But the man — I stood and looked at him, while a smile crept over his features and broadened there. All at once I knew.

"But, good gracious, your Royal Highness," I said, "who would expect to find you here before

any one is up and stirring? You are really yourself to blame."

He laughed. "We are early risers, my children and I. We have been up and out since six o'clock." And so they had, I learned afterwards, to the despair of the cook at the Bishop's house where they were staying. He introduced his son and daughter. "And now," said the Prince with a smile that had a challenge in it, "where do you suppose we have been? Down at the river to look at the bridge where you first met your wife. You see, I have read your book. But we did not find it."

I explained that the Long Bridge had been but a memory these twenty years, but to me a very dear one, and he nodded brightly, "Give her my warm regards." She was glad when I told her, for her loyal heart had made room for him beside his sweet sisters from our childhood. When the lilacs bloomed again, I was alone, and he sent me a message of sorrow and sympathy. And because of that, for his liking of her, he shall always have a place in my heart.

They told no end of stories of the delight he had given by this gift, so invaluable in a public man, of remembering and recognizing men after the lapse of years. One peasant, come to town to see the show, was halted by Prince Frederik in the market square, as was I, and greeted as an old comrade. They had been recruits together in one regiment; for the royal princes in Denmark have to serve in the ranks with their fellow-citizens. They are not made generals at birth. In Copenhagen I was told that the Prince kept tab on all that went on in the Rigsdag, and the man without convictions dreaded nothing so much as his long memory. With reason it would seem; for not long before, when a certain member of the Opposition made a troublesome speech, the Crown Prince calmly brought out his scrap-book and showed the embarrassed minister where the same man had taken the exactly opposite stand half a score of years before. It is not hard to understand how a memory like that might become potent in the deliberations of a parliamentary body,

particularly among a people with a keen sense of the ridiculous, like the Danes. However, they have something better than that. They are above all a loyal people. I have never seen anything more touching or more creditable to a nation than the way the Danes put aside their claims when the dispute between them and King Christian's ministers over constitutional rights became bitter, and the King, loyal himself to the backbone, would not let the ministers go.

"He is of the past that does not comprehend," they said, "but he is our good old King and we love him."

And the clouds blew over, and the people and their ruler were united in an affection that wiped out every trace of resentment. King Frederik is of the present. He knows his people, and they trust him with the love they gave his father. Stronger buttress was never built for a happy union of Prince and People.

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